

ARK THE LEGEND

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ROK GAME FANTASY STORY

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Special Reward

-A new city has appeared to the north of Nabe.

-So far the northern trading port Charem has only existed in rumours. It is registered with the galactic federation as a special autonomous trade region.

-Charem is a new, advanced base in the northern frontier!

Right after Charem was registered as the autonomous trade region. The news spread throughout the excited users of the federation at a LTE speed. The users with a merchant affiliate showed a particularly hot reaction.

“Charem.....that city was real?”

The merchants were no strangers to the name Charem. It was a city that smuggled goods through the galaxy so they had no choice but to hear about it. However, the exact location and how to access it were unknown so it had been treated like an urban legend until now.

“This is a great opportunity to open new trade routes!”

The merchants gathered their baggage and headed for Charem. Then the interest of the warriors naturally turned to Charem.

“There are still a lot of unexplored areas in the north compared to the rest of Istana. It had no city or village so it was too much trouble to go but now the situation has changed. With Charem acting as a base we can now explore the northern areas!”

The adventurous people cheered.

“The new trading city has appeared so merchants will flock there. Huhuhu, it is easy to make money from merchants. Right now Charem isn’t connected to other cities via the Star Gate. The routes there will still be limited so it will be simple to take from merchants. Let’s go! Grab your weapons!”

Even the criminals cheered.

“The security around Charem won’t be working properly. Therefore a lot of thieves will target small scale merchants. We will escort them to destroy the thugs and raise awareness with agents in other areas. Let’s go! Pack your shields!”

The security companies cheered as well. But not everyone welcomed the emergence of Charem. Dozens of octopuses were watching from the lake as Charem suddenly appeared.

–Unbelievable.....

–No way! Why did a city all of a sudden.....?

–Oh my god! A disaster! This is a disaster!

Around 100 octopuses grabbed their heads and screamed.

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

A few hours ago. A large spaceship emitted a roaring sound and flew away. After the Sufferers incident finished, the Aschulat sent some transport ships as support. There were two types of people who took this transport ship. The city had been blocked for a month so merchants were on the ship to help with deliveries. Of course, Charem was autonomous region but it was still under the control of the federation. Therefore criminals or hostile species like Clark had no choice but to feel anxious. As soon as the blockade was lifted, many people swarmed to the port and exited Charem.

“This is why it doesn’t have the atmosphere of a shopping mall.”

Ark clicked his tongue as he looked around and murmured. Huge crowds were gathering at the port so the other regions were relatively quiet. He could wander the wide road without bumping into someone and the doors for the

shops lined up barely opened.

“But this is a temporary phenomenon.”

A new city had been registered in an area that was previously classified as undeveloped land. Right now people were ebbing out of Charem like a tide but soon more people would flock in. Until now this city was filled with smugglers not pioneers. Now Charem would change. Charem was a special autonomous trading region with fewer restrictions compared to other cities so it was likely to grow explosively.

“This is the greatest time to grab a spot!”

Ark looked around Charem with shining eyes. If he had to explain.....

‘It has been 4 months since I’ve started Galaxian and I hadn’t really adapted during that time. It was I didn’t have a concrete direction. If I have a specific direction then I can endeavour to work towards that goal.’

When checking it clearly, it was Lucifer. He had proposed a condition and he had hurt his head thinking about it. He also died while raising his level. The condition that Lucifer raised was to reach the ultimate goal. It was such an ambiguous condition that Ark wandered off.

‘But there is no reason to think too hard. No matter what the ultimate goal is, there is only one answer. The strongest person in the game wins! I just have to be stronger than Lucifer.’

It didn’t mean simply raising his character level. Anybody could raise their level in a general PC game. However MMORPGs, especially virtual reality games weren’t that simple. His purpose in New World was to make money and he raised his level to reach that goal, ultimately becoming the strongest person in that game.

‘Yes, it is clear that I need an organization as well as power to fight against Lucifer.’

When he thought about it, Ark also did that in New World. At that time Lucifer had the Army of Darkness as a powerful organization. Most people only remembered Ark's part against Lucifer but he had actually led a coalition to win the war.

'Fortunately I was the commander of the allied forces. I was also able to protect Lancel village that was my home base thanks to Dark Eden. They were the reason I was able to push back Lucifer in New World. Yes, now isn't the time to be wandering. Right now I need a base. I need funds and a base to rally the forces!'

This was the conclusion Ark came to after 4 months of worrying. In order to create a stronghold, he needed to register as an agent in Galaxian. An agent might seem similar to a guild in general RPG games but it was actually a different organization. And the registration cost was 27,000 gold! The price was 10 times the amount required to establish a guild in other games. Unlike a guild that was a simple gathering, an agent was a business. The privileges given was also different from the standards of a guild.....it was too complicated to expand on right now but the agent registration was another worry.

'Where should I do the agent registration?'

It was this. When registering an agent, the city registered in would become a base. The rights given to the agent came from the relevant city. So Ark had considered Tatuine, the most prosperous city in the galactic federation. But he changed his mind the moment Charem was registered as an autonomous region.

'Right now Tatuine is the most stable city. However it is the same for other users. Many users have already registered as agents in Tatuine.'

It meant there would be competitors everywhere.

'Charem has no influx of users yet. The city is new so there will be more

opportunities. Moreover, it is designated as an autonomous region so the growth potential is a lot better than Tatuine. There is no better place to be my base.'

Furthermore, he received a 30% discount on services thanks to his Mediator title. This privilege would be a tremendous help when operating a business in the future. No, even the 30% discount on the 27,000 agent registration rights means that he only needed to pay 18,900 gold. The discount gave him a huge potential for growth! It was a no-brainer. And Ark presently had 18,650 gold.

'I still need 250 gold even with the discount but.....'

He still needed to receive the reward for the <Operation to retake the management system> quest. He could receive the reward as money and register as an agent!

'I'm close to reaching my goal!'

Kukwang! Kukwang! Kukwang! Kukwang!

He heard a banging sound while he was walking. It was the noise of equipment repairing the areas destroyed by the Sufferers. Ark would soon register as an agent so this was like sweet music to his ears. He finally reached the desired street.

"It is here."

A huge metal building was being built in a corner of the business district. It was made from bits of metal scraps so the building was shabby but that was an unrelated matter. The important thing was that this was the residence of the Lord of Charem. In other words, this was the temporary lodgings for Lord Java who he would receive the quest reward from. Ark showed the guards at the front of the hotel the counter that Clark had given him when he first joined the squad.

"I am a mercenary who participated in the operation to retake the management system with the Phoenix squad."

“Oh, I’ve heard about you from Clark.”

Phoenix was a mercenary squad but they were Charem’s elite soldiers. And it was also known that they played a crucial role in settling the Sufferers problem. Therefore the guards had a good impression of the Phoenix members. The atmosphere made him anticipate the quest reward.

“Then follow me. I’ll guide you to Lord Java.”

“Thank you.”

Ark followed behind the guards. They crossed a long hallway and finally arrived in front of a spacious hall.

“How many times did I tell you?”

A rough voice was heard from the hall.

“If it wasn’t for their help then Charem wouldn’t have been saved!”

“A bizarre voice is talking. Did your head rot while you were stuck in the pipes? The soldiers of the federation and Aschulat were the ones who saved Charem.”

“Are you denying it?”

“There is no more need to negotiate!”

“I just.....”

“It is disgusting to hear! Stop and go away! I don’t have time to argue with you. Guards, what are you doing? Remove this guy!”

“Wait a minute! Please wait a minute, Lord-nim! Lord-nim!”

“I said I don’t want to hear it!”

‘What? What’s going on? In addition, this voice is.....eh?’

Ark’s eyes widened as he peeked over the eyes of the guards. A creature that looked like a giant larva was sitting on a floating chair in the middle of the

hall. If he saw it in the Outlands he would shoot a bullet into its head but it didn't seem to be a monster judging by the atmosphere. No, the various jewels and decorations hanging from it made it seem like a high ranking alien rather than a monster. The larva creature was probably Java, the Lord of Charem. However Ark wasn't surprised because Lord Java was a larva.

“Jay?”

The man being dragged by the guards suddenly raised his head after hearing Ark's voice. Jay was the man who helped Ark navigate through the control tower! But Ark had forgotten about him after taking care of the Mumu and the negotiations with the Aschulat. Jay also looked at Ark with surprised eyes.

“Ah Ark-nim! That's right!”

Jay shrugged off the guards and approached Ark.

“It is good that you came. Lord-nim, here! Here is a witness!”

“What? Who is this?”

“He is the person that Clark of the Phoenix squad told you about.”

A guard replied after the larva frowned at Ark. Jay nodded and said.

“Yes, that's right! I told you. This is the warrior who decided not to give up after receiving the surprise attack from the Mumu and losing most of his fellow soldiers! He is the witness who will prove me words. Ark-nim please say something!”

“No, I don't know.....”

Ark scratched his head with a puzzled expression and Jay immediately shouted.

“The Charenjok!”

“Eh? Charenjok?”

“Yes, the Charenjok! Will Ark-nim deny it as well? Ark-nim was able to survive the Mumu’s attack and save Charem thanks to the help of the Charenjok. If they didn’t help then it is likely that Charem would’ve been destroyed. Shouldn’t they receive some kind of compensation? Even if they are slaves, doesn’t it make sense? I won’t leave until they give them compensation!”

“.....Ah!”

He had forgotten until he heard Jay’s words. The agent registration distracted him so much that he forgot about Tuntun and the Charenjok. He had received a quest from the elder Bakum to find the missing Charenjok. But when he thought about it, it wasn’t as easy as he thought. The octopuses that disappeared were alive but they were presently Java’s slave. This was the reason Jay was raving wildly. Anyway, the Charenjok were the ones who saved Jay from the Sufferers. He was spouting fire because he wanted the Charenjok to escape from their identities as slaves.

‘This is true.....’

Ark scratched his head and looked at Java. Ark had visited Java to receive the quest compensation. Yet now he was embroiled in the problem of the Charenjok. Of course, it wouldn’t be a problem if Java decided to release the Charenjok but that was highly unlikely judging from his expression. No matter how he looked at Java, he didn’t seem like an alien with a good nature. In other words, there was a high possibility that he would incur Java’s ill feelings. No, it felt like Java already had ill feelings towards him. Java had been glaring the whole time Jay was talking to Ark.

‘However I can’t pretend ignorance.....’

Anyway it was true that Ark received Tuntun’s help. He couldn’t pretend otherwise just to receive the reward. But he was worried about suddenly interjecting. Then Java who was staring at Ark suddenly tilted his head to one side.

“Wait? Ark? If you are Ark then perhaps.....”

“Yes, Ark is the name of the human who negotiated with the Aschulat ambassador.”

Someone who looked like a secretary replied and Java’s gaze turned back to Ark. His eyes were asking if it was the same person.

“Yes, I am that Ark.”

“But wasn’t the mercenary who joined the Phoenix squad called Alan?”

“There were circumstances and I used a pseudonym for a while.”

Ark scowled at Jay and replied. In fact, Ark hadn’t thought about revealing his identity until he received the quest reward. Ark had sneaked into Charem as a spy for Marquis Martin in the first place. The whole thing was resolved but he didn’t know what problems it would cause.

So he was still using the Hyde Helmet but Jay had called him Ark.

“That is normal for mercenaries.”

Fortunately Java didn’t dig deeper into the matter. The unpleasant expression on his face also smoothed out.

“I never imagined that the person who completed the mission with the Phoenix squad and the person who mediated with the Aschulat was the same. You saved Charem. But this is a different problem. I don’t care who you are or what you say. The slaves are my possessions. It is natural for my possessions to protect my assets. Yet you want me to give compensation for doing their duty? They are my slaves. Other people who no right to tell me how to treat them.”

Java spoke with an arrogant expression.

Then a light flashed in Ark’s eyes and he said.

“Wait a moment. Lord-nim is acknowledging that the Charenjok helped?”

“What? No, I mean.....”

Java flinched and tried to make an excuse but Ark struck first.

“Like Jay explained, it is obvious that the Charenjok played a large role in saving Charem. Of course, they are Lord-nim’s slaves so you have the right to do what you want with them. However, Charem is now designated a special autonomous trade region so many people would be flocking from all over. If they know the contents of this situation then I’m worried that they will misunderstand Lord-nim.”

“Hrmm.....”

His words were effective. Java folded his short arms and started thinking. Then Jay took the chance and spoke quickly.

“Yes! I will spread rumours! I’ll spread rumours about Lord-nim in every direction!”

“This bastard.....!”

Java glared angrily at Jay. Then he looked at Ark again before nodding.

“If you received the Mediator title then you definitely aren’t ordinary. Okay, I’ll accept your proposal.”

“R-really?”

The answer was surprisingly different from what he expected. It was settled so easily that he was puzzled. Java laughed and continued.

“However I will only release the Charenjok called Tuntun.”

“Huh?”

“Isn’t it natural? I’ve heard about all the circumstances from Jay. According to him, isn’t Tuntun the only one out of the Charenjok who saved you? The other Charenjok were just hiding in the pipes. There is no reason to give mercy to slaves like that. If you still want to save the other Charenjok.....I

will sell them.”

Java asked a man in uniform standing next to him.

“Adjutant, how many Charenjok slaves do I have?”

“If I add all the young children that the androids captured from the water facility, the total is 35. Excluding Tuntun that is 34 Charenjok.”

“34 in total. If it is 30 gold for 1 then that is a total of 1,020 gold. Okay, I will make it 1,000 gold. How about it? This is the maximum that I can tolerate. I’ve achieved my obligations by releasing Tuntun. If you want to release the other Charenjok then you have to pay that amount. Isn’t that right?”

As expected from the Lord of a smuggling city, Java wasn’t easy to crack. There was no room for him to object.....Jay also released this and cursed.

“Dammit, this guy is really nasty! Spit! Really petty and nasty!”

“Shut up, Jay!”

Java was shooting a really mean glare at Jay.

“You shouldn’t be worrying about the Charenjok right now. I’ve received some testimonies from employees that escaped from the control tower. If the reason for the outbreak was due to the research then you will have to take responsibility as the head of research.”

“That’s it! This job, I resign! I resign!”

“He dares.....!”

Java snapped angrily at Jay. Then he acted like it was too troublesome and turned back to Ark.

“Anyway, this is the maximum amount that I can concede. This is a courtesy that I’m showing you because the Aschulat ambassador recognized you. But I also have a condition.”

“Huh? Condition?”

“Before saying that.....you performed the mission with the Phoenix squad so shouldn’t you receive the compensation? Let’s check that and speak afterwards.”

‘What condition is he suddenly talking about?’

Ark was uncomfortable by Java’s sudden words but handed the counter over to the secretary. Java asked the secretary who was looking at the counter on his computer.

“What is the number that is piled up on the counter?”

“1, 646. According to the agreed contract with the Phoenix squad, we need to pay 800 gold.”

‘.....800 gold!’

Ark felt an exhilarating feeling after hearing the secretary’s words. Although he entered the control tower with the Phoenix members, Ark was all along after the Mumu attacked the elevator. The federation and Aschulat troops cleaned up the Sufferers but that was possible because of Ark. When considering that point, 800 gold was a lot for a quest that he received by chance. He had gained an extra 800 gold. No, it was quite a satisfying amount. Ark’s biggest interest was the 250 gold required for the agent registration. If he was given 800 gold then he could register and have some spare money!

‘That’s it. I can complete the agent registration.’

Ark puffed up with anticipation.

“This is my condition.”

“Huh?”

“Charem has been attacked by the Sufferers for 1 month so half the city is in ruins. The meeting with the federation and Aschulat has designated this area as an autonomous trading region but nothing can be done in this state. The

problem is Charem's recovery. We need huge amounts of money for the recovery project. Charem's urgent problem is to save every copper possible."

"T-then my pay....."

Did it have something to do with the Charenjok? Ark started feeling uneasy.

"It's not that I'm not paying you. I just want to postpone it a bit."

"Postpone the payment date? For how long?"

"Let's see? Restoring the city should take about 1 month?"

Ark's body felt cold after hearing Java's answer. Even if he didn't receive the quest reward, he could still do the agent registration. Among the loot obtained from the control tower, he could sell the 'RPG PW-600' and 'Ray Steel-???' and it would be sufficient to get 250 gold. However Ark was irritated that he would have to wait 1 month to receive a quest reward. Think about it. Who wouldn't be annoyed if they expected to receive their pay check today only to be told to wait 1 month? Java was looking at Ark's expression and began to talk quickly.

"If you don't like that then there are some other ways."

"Some other ways?"

"There are two ways. The first one is to receive the reward through the Charenjok. The price for the Charenjok is 1,000 gold so you have to pay me 200 gold."

"Ark-nim, 200 gold....."

"No!"

He replied in a decisive voice before Jay could finish talking. The octopuses who were slaves had saved Jay and Ark's lives. But like Java said, Tuntun was the one who actually helped him and his freedom was guaranteed. Ark had no reason to be responsible for the other octopuses. And the octopuses were hiding in the northern lake so they didn't have any money. There was

still the <Under the Black Water> quest but he wouldn't receive a dime if he rescued the Charenjok. At best it would probably be a bag of fish for travelling. There was no quest compensation and he would have to pay 200 gold.

“And the other way?”

“Play a simple game with me.”

“Game?”

“Yes, there are no copper coins in my vault right now. In order to obtain the funds necessary to restore Charem, I need to dispose of the items in my personal collection that I've gathered for a long time. But it will be tough to receive a fair value when I have to sell it so quickly. Therefore.....I'm also uncomfortable postponing the payment for 1 month so how about you receive something from my collection as a reward instead?”

“Take something from your collection as a reward?”

“Yes, I'm actually more comfortable with this. However the control with Kalbern and the Phoenix members said I had to pay in cash. But if you accept then we can change the terms of the contract.”

“Then why did you talk about a game?”

“Huhuhu, this is the key point.”

Java laughed and pointed towards an iron door.

“It would be no problem if I decided to give a specific item in the first place but the contract agreed to give money. I have no complaints but my position means I just can't give it to you. And it will be difficult to confirm if the item is actually 800 gold. So I want you to go to my collections warehouse to select it directly. You can choose one item. Time isn't an issue. Take your time and select it carefully. However it ends if you exit the warehouse. In other words, the item you pick can be worth 1 gold. Of course, the opposite is

true and it can even be worth 10,000 gold. Do you understand? This is a game to test your discerning eye.”

“A game to test my discerning eye.....”

Ark looked at the iron door that Java indicated. If he received this proposal in New World then he would accept without thinking. Ark had the skill called ‘Discerning Eye’ and his experience meant he could guess the approximate value of the items. But Ark wasn’t familiar with the swords, armour and items in Galaxian so he couldn’t judge the value. It was the future so special items like firearms, RPGs and grenades also existed. It was difficult for Ark to guess the price of a commercial transaction. In some cases he might suffer an enormous loss.

‘But.....’

There was also a chance of gaining a huge benefit.

‘And the value of the goods isn’t just determined by the store price alone. It is like the meteorite in the laboratory. Some items might be worth thousands of gold but I won’t be able to sell it at the stores. There might be a lot of things similar to the meteorite in Java’s collection. Yes, this might be my chance to get my hands on an excellent item. If I add some conditions then I might not lose money.’

Ark considered for a moment before speaking to Java.

“I accept. But I have a few questions.”

“What is it?”

“Is there a time limit?”

“No. It doesn’t matter how many days you take. Just search until you find something you like.”

“Are there any rules about touching the stuff?”

“It doesn’t matter as long as you only bring out one item.”

“Then my last point. I don’t know what types of items are in the warehouse. In some cases I might have trouble lifting it alone so I want to go in with Jay.”

“It also doesn’t matter who goes in with you.”

‘.....The game is over.’

Ark was inwardly certain of Ark’s answer after hearing Java’s answer. As long as he could directly confirm the item information window, he could obtain the most expensive item even if it took some time. Of course, it was also difficult to determine the value even with the information window. That’s why he wanted to make Jay enter with him. Jay might’ve resigned just now but he had still been Charem’s head of research. He would possess more knowledge about relics than Ark.

‘This is a game that I absolutely can’t lose!’

“I’ll accept!”

Ark’s eyes shone as he answered.

Yet that didn’t even last for 1 minute before Ark’s face turned dark.

“T-this is.....”

A shocking scene unfolded before him in the warehouse. Ark naturally expected a warehouse full of treasure after hearing about Java’s collection. However, stacked in the warehouse were piles of scrap items and machine parts instead of treasures. Instead of a collection, it should be called a pile of junk!

“I-it’s a scam!”

Jay shouted.

“A scam? Where did I scam you? This is my collections warehouse that I told you about. The collections warehouse where I keep all the goods gathered from the areas that the Sufferers destroyed.”

“No way! You didn’t say that there was only junk in the warehouse!”

“I never said that it wasn’t second hand items. This might be a misunderstanding but I never lied. I never said that you would find something worth 800 gold in the warehouse.”

Java shamelessly replied.

‘.....This!’

Ark now realized his mistake. He was fooled by the word ‘collection’ and forgot to ask the main question.

He forgot to ask if there was an item worth more than 800 gold!

“But there is no need to be disappointed. We gathered everything from those areas so who knows what might’ve been missed? Why don’t you check everything one by one? If you search eagerly then you might even find a treasure.”

Java turned his levitating chair and exited the warehouse.

‘.....I was stupid!’

Recklessness surged inside him afterwards. When he first heard the proposition, Ark thought the probability of losing was 1%. On the other hand, the probability of a jackpot was at least 50%. But he should’ve had doubts. The proposal was too good to trust. He should’ve been suspicious.

‘The Phoenix members told me. Java isn’t a guy to be trusted.’

This was why Kalbern specifically placed a money reward in the contract. But Ark was careless with Java. He felt uncomfortable with him but Ark wasn’t expecting a scam.

“It’s a scam! Scam! Ark-nim, let’s just leave!”

Jay was still clamouring away.

“No, like Java said it isn’t a scam.”

Ark looked at the pile of junk as he said.

“It is like Java said. He didn’t lie. I just didn’t question him enough. And I was the one who accepted the offer.”

“Oh my god! Why are you saying this now? Isn’t Ark-nim angry?”

“I am angry. 800 gold suddenly changed to several coppers worth of scrap iron. Of course anger would surge. But if I just ran out of the warehouse then it is GAME OVER. And running out and hitting him isn’t a good idea. He isn’t an ordinary NPC but a Lord. We would just need to pay hospital expenses. I’m angry! I’m angry but there’s nothing to do!”

The result was obvious. But Ark hadn’t given up yet.

“Please help me.”

Ark rolled up his sleeve and walked to a pile of scrap iron. Then Jay frowned.

“Are you really going to search through that pile of crap?”

“Giving up is just what Java wants.”

“I guess, but.....”

“Java thinks there is no item over 800 gold here but he hasn’t checked everything. Therefore we should look at every piece of scrap metal. There is no reason to give up yet.”

“You’re really going to check it?”

“I have to.”

Ark replied without thinking about it. From the beginning Ark had been planning to check all items and picking the best one. Things were no different now. There were more than 100 items so the odds of finding something worth 800 gold.....it was honestly depressing but Ark wasn’t going to give up.

“I won’t give Java the satisfaction of abandoning this task!”

“.....I understand. I’ll help you.”

Finally Jay rolled up his sleeves and approached.

“Then I’ll dig up the scrap metal. Jay-nim will classify them.”

Ark took out his shovel with a determined expression.

“Then let’s start! Ohhhh!”

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

Ark started continuously digging.

-<Old Motor>, <Used Battery>, <Broken Monitor>.....

Trash kept on pouring out!

“Now let’s continue! Ohhhh!”

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

-<Clothing Pieces>, <Crumpled Pieces of Iron>, <9 mm Screw x10>.....

Trash flowed out over and over again! Trash! Trash!

“Pant pant pant, dammit!”

Ark cursed while breathing harshly. His lower back was sore after digging for 6 hours without a break. But the result was a total failure. Even when he dug trench after trench, the only thing he found was japtem. It was japtem that was only worth several gold! Not one item was worth a lot of money.

‘Well, I knew this from the beginning.....’

Not even any useful items showed up. If he couldn’t find an item worth 800 gold then he was hoping to find something useful. He searched for piles of junk for 6 hours but he didn’t even find one cheap iron sword. Fortunately he learnt the Metallurgy skill so he found some scrap metal worth 3~4 gold.

‘If there any item that I can use in here?’

Ark looked around with gloomy eyes before shaking his head.

‘No, I shouldn’t be weak! I’ve only searched through 30% of this. There is still more than half left. I can’t give up until I search through every piece of scrap metal!’

Ark gnashed his teeth together and grabbed the shovel again. He bent his waist and started digging again.

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa.....tang!

The end of his shovel hit against a large object. He moved the surrounding scrap metal around and found a big machine buried. Most of the scrap metal piled in the warehouse was the size of a soccer ball. But the machine deeply buried in the scrap metal was more than 2 metres.

“This might be the most expensive thing we can find in here.”

Because it was scrap metal. The value of scrap metal depended on the weight.

“If this is a rare metal then we might be able to receive hundreds of gold for it.....damn, it is just an alloy. What, I can only receive 10 gold for this size?”

Ark checked the metal of the machine using metallurgy and resumed digging again. Then something popped into his head.

“Wait? The name of this machine.....?”

He checked the information window again! There were other pieces of it scattered around.

‘Yes, so far everything I’ve checked was japtem. That’s right, Java collected all the scrap metal left in the ruins of the city. Clearly.....Java’s proposal was taking out one item so this isn’t breaking the rule. Maybe.....’

“I found it! A way to defeat that larva bastard!”

Ark smiled and muttered.

–Alive?

A large octopus shouted with an agitated look. After spending a full day in Java's warehouse, Ark exited and rode the air board towards the Charenjok's hiding place. The octopuses were delighted that their kin were alive but that only lasted for a brief moment.

–But a slave.....

Bakum shook his head and sighed.

–That means they can't return even if they're alive?

"I'm sorry. I spoke to the lord of Charem many times but I only managed to release Tuntun. However I have a way to free the rest of the Charenjok."

–You have a way? What is it?

"Buying the Charenjok from the lord of Charem."

–B-buying? Buying the same species like a slave trader?

"Yes. It is wrong to pay money to buy a race that should be free but that is the reality. Why don't you just think of it as paying a ransom to kidnappers?"

–That is true however.....

Bakum moved his 7 legs and hesitated. He looked at Ark with a worried expression and asked.

–How much do we have to pay?

"Except for Tuntun, Java has 34 Charenjok so the ransom is 1,000 gold.

-1...1,000 gold!

Bakum's head turned pale white with fear.

–That's impossible! We're hiding in this type of place so how can we get that

money?

Ark also knew this as well. The Charenjok wouldn't be hiding in a place like this if they had money. They would just use this money to buy citizenship. But the Charenjok could only catch fish and couldn't gather that type of money. Well, the Charenjok on R-14 could use their pipe cleaning skills to earn money but these Charenjok couldn't. However.....

“I'll prepare the way to gain the money.”

In fact, Ark had a reason for visiting the Charenjok as soon as he left the warehouse. Some time ago, Ark had found the body of a huge machine in the pile of rubbish. Of course it was broken from the Sufferers attacks. Therefore it was just junk. He could only sell it as scrap metal.

Then Ark had a brilliant idea.

‘Can this machine be repaired?’

Ark had the idea because of small machine parts. The information window had written ‘some parts of a machine.’ He found a 2 metre large machine so he might be able to repair it. If it wasn't broken then the machine would be worth a considerable amount!

‘Yes, Java placed all the scrap metal found in an area together. Then there is a large possibility that all the parts for his machine are in the warehouse. If I look for the necessary parts then I can assemble it!’

Of course not everyone could assemble a machine. Unless it had a simple structure, only engineers with the ‘mechanical engineering’ skill could assemble one. Obviously Ark wasn't an engineer.....

“If there is a body then it is possible.”

Jay was an advanced engineer in charge of Charem's research. He also had the necessary tools in Cheksun's Toolbox. Since then, the direction of Ark's work changed 180 degrees. He looked for parts that seemed like they would

fit a large machine. That's why Ark and Jay spent an entire day in the warehouse. They even needed to find the precise screws to attach the parts to the machine. Finding the parts, attaching them with screws, tightening and oiling took one day! When the machine was restored to its original appearance.....

-Space Food Maker (Ver. 2)

Item type: Primary Production Machine

A machine made to settle the chronic food problem in the space pioneering age. Most planets in the galaxy contain wild flora and fauna that contain ingredients harmful to humans. In addition, the environment was too poor to grow crops common on earth so the early human pioneers experienced food problems.

The Space Food Maker was developed to settle this problem. This machine removes the various toxins and forms the extracted nutrients into the form of an energy bar. The resulting space food is easily to store, can be consumed anywhere and the prices are also affordable for pioneers.

<After ingredients are inserted, 120 Space Foods will be produced per hour. The quality of the Space Food will range between 1~3 depending on the quality and freshness of the ingredients>

Space Food Maker! It was just scrap metal when broken but the Space Food Maker was a machine worth thousands of gold! Java never imagined that Ark and Jay would be able to put together a machine like that. As expected, Java ran wild as soon as Ark dragged out the Space Food Maker.

“T-this is.....a foul! This is a foul!”

“Your condition was that I could bring out one item from the warehouse. You didn't say anything about not assembling the parts inside. And.....isn't this 'one' item?”

Ark tapped the machine that had been changed to 10 metres using hundreds of parts and laughed. Ark could also use the same methods as Java. Java had to keep his promise. Java might be a larva but he was still a lord. Ark might've built it with hundreds of parts but the Space Food Maker was still one item! In the end Java was forced to admit it. 800 gold compensation had been turned into thousands of gold. However there was a small problem. The Space Food Maker might be worth thousands of gold.....

“It worked! Now we can save the Charenjok!”

Jay was still talking nonsense. Ark had no intention of wasting 1,000 gold to buy 34 Charenjok. But he couldn't ignore Jay's pleas now that he had the Space Food Maker. Ark thought for a while before finding a way to use the Space Food Maker.

–You're offering to rent the Space Food Maker?

“That's right.”

Ark smiled and replied.

“In the beginning I thought about just selling the Space Food Maker so I can pay the Charenjok's ransom. But I know that the Charenjok have their own pride despite being refugees.”

-No, that's not.....

“Also! Even if I buy their freedom, isn't this place different from before? The Charenjok are still refugees. There is no guarantee that something like this won't happen again. You've been hiding here but now Charem occupies this area. Soon a large number of people will be flocking here. Quite a few of them will be slave hunters.”

-Yes, that's right. That's why we've been discussing about leaving this place.

Bakum had received a huge shock when Charem first appeared. Ark nodded as if he understood and continued.

“The Space Food Maker needs ingredients. If you have the Space Food Maker then you can also gain money. If you catch the fish in the lake and make Space Food then you can eventually make enough money to buy a federation citizenship. You’ll no longer need to hide!”

–Ooh!

The octopuses murmured with excitement at Ark’s speech. This was the method Ark developed to use the Space Food Maker. The Space Food Maker meant he didn’t need to waste money buying food but it actually wasn’t good for general users. The weight made it difficult to carry around and the person always needed ingredients. At least 2 people were needed, one to supply the ingredients and the other to operate the machine. However, the price of Space Food was 10~50 copper. If it produced 120 per hour in 24 hours, that would be 2,880 produced a day. If he calculated with the maximum amount then his profit would be 14 gold and 40 silver a day. It was possible to get a profit from the machine.

.....If he didn’t include the labour costs.

‘It is different if there are aliens that will work for free.’

Ark looked at the 100 Charenjok and smiled. The northern lake was overflowing with fish that the Charenjok could catch. If the Charenjok didn’t rest and continued catching fish then it was possible to have a 24 hour non-stop operation! And if he rented it to the Charenjok then Ark didn’t need to manage the Space Food Maker machine directly.

‘Charem is an autonomous trade region so pioneers will flock here. Besides, the areas around Charem were wastelands. Of course it was possible to buy supplies in Charem. And Space Food is the item required above everything else! There will be plenty of customers!’

He even created a sales channel already. And Ark would get 30% of the profit. If he left them alone then the octopuses would earn money for him like

the SCV (StarCraft Workers)

“However 1,000 gold is a large amount of money so it wouldn’t be easy to make that amount using the Space Food Maker. But that is the best I can do for now. The northern lake is also full of ingredients. If you have patience and work hard then it won’t take as long as you think.”

Bakum nodded after hearing Ark’s words.

–The fact that the Charenjok are enslaved and we have to pay a ransom is deplorable. But there is no point lamenting the situation so I will accept your offer. And one day we might be able to buy a citizenship. However, this isn’t a safe place for us anymore. What guarantee is there that we won’t be caught as slaves?

It was an obvious problem. Naturally Ark had already thought of this.

“Like I said before, Tuntun isn’t Java’s slave anymore. He will stay in Charem to help his friends. However.....Tuntun might be released but he is a refugee so how can he possible stay in Charem?”

–I don’t know.

“It is thanks to this.”

Ark laughed and took out a familiar collar.

-Slave’s Collar

Item Type: Restriction Ring

If you enter the authentication number of your Nympe into this ring, you can restrict the body of a monster. The collar can tighten to give pain and it will blow up if the monster leaves the designated area.

The collar was developed to train captured monsters but now it is used to capture nationless aliens not protected by the federation. Therefore it became known as the slave’s collar. It is prohibited by law to use these

rings on people with a citizenship.

It was the slave's collar that had been around Tuntun! Bakum was also sensitive to the sight of the collar.

–T-this is?

“Yes, the slave's collar.”

–W-why do you have this thing.....?

“This will guarantee your safety in the future.”

–It will guarantee our future? Don't tell me.....?

“Yes, by law aliens with no citizenship won't be protected by the federation. But if you are recognized as somebody else's slave then no one can capture you. There is no reason to fear slave hunters and you can also freely access the city.”

–We will become your slaves?

Bakum muttered with an unwilling expression. The other Charenjok who heard the word ‘slave’ also trembled. But Ark had no intention of being put off by their unease. Ark had already spent quite a bit of money on this plan. The Space Food Maker was equipped with parts from the warehouse but the inner battery and several motor parts were so badly damaged that they needed to be replaced. He also purchased the slave collars for the octopuses. This was an investment into the octopus SCV so that he could earn a steady income! And Ark knew that the Charenjok couldn't refuse his offer. If they rejected the proposal then they were giving up on the 34 octopuses, including 5 children who were caught by Java. The Charenjok also had no other plans for their future.

‘The octopuses will understand if I make a reasonable justification.....’

“I feel bad even though it is just for show. But this is the best course for now.

I received the token as a symbol of the Charenjok's friendship so can't you think of these collars as a symbol of my friendship?"

—Okay.

In the end Bakum nodded his head.

—Putting on the collar weighs on my mind.....but it is a symbol of your friendship. No, we will think of it as a token of our appreciation for you. Thank you. Bakum bowed on behalf of his clan.

Bakum then placed the collar on his head. The remaining octopuses continuously used the Slave's Collar and an information window popped up.

-112 Charenjok have been registered as Ark-nim's slave.

The federation basically doesn't admit slavery. However, illegal aliens who are wearing the Slave's Collar will be treated as the private property of the citizen.

Therefore if someone else tries to capture the slave then they could be punished with unauthorized infringement of private property or theft.

And.....112 SCV were established.

CEO's Responsibilities

-Tuntun!

–Elder Bakum-nim!

The 2 octopuses embraced while crying. They were Tuntun who regained his freedom and Elder Bakum.

-This guy! How much have you suffered during this time? I'm sorry. I'm the elder yet I never knew my relatives were living a life of slavery.

–Not at all. Isn't this my fault? And now I've gained freedom thanks to Ark so it is okay. However some guys are still stuck with Java so I can't be entirely pleased.

–Hum.....that's right.

Bakum nodded with a melancholy expression.

–But don't be too concerned about that. They will come back to us in the near future. Soon we will be able to live openly as citizens of the galactic federation. This is all thanks to our friend. He is clearly a friend sent from the heavens during our time of misery.

The person Bakum was admiring was Ark! After concluding the slave contract with the Charenjok, Ark led Bakum and 30 octopuses back to Charem. The Charenjok had left their hiding place in order to transport the Space Food Maker. This was because the Charenjok's hiding spot was going to be the food manufacturing factory for the time being.

“Jay-nim, are you ready?”

“Yes.”

Jay tapped the Space Food Maker.

“There are twenty 100 litre tubes attached. This degree of buoyancy means

that you should have no problem carrying it to the lakeside.”

“Are you coming to the Charenjok’s village?”

“Of course. I need to check the machine after it is moved.”

“Then please. It’s only a bit more trouble.”

“Huh? Aren’t we going together?”

“I need to handle some other business.”

“Ah, yes.....”

Jay made an ambiguous expression at Ark’s answer.

“What’s wrong? Did you have something you want to say?”

“Something I want to say.....no. Let’s meet at the Charenjok village.”

He shook his head and went to meet the octopuses.

“Come on everybody! Let’s start moving! The main components are fixed firmly but be careful when carrying it. Be especially careful that the circuits don’t touch any water.”

–Understood. Start!

–Yes, Elder-nim! Let’s go! This is our source of income!

The 30 octopuses grabbed the Space Food Maker at Bakum’s command. They pushed it until it reached the waterway towards the lake and started floating. The octopuses plunged into the lake carrying the Space Food Maker.

“Then let’s meet in the Charenjok’s village! Let’s go!”

Jay cried out before heading into the lake. The goal was the Charenjok village. Or the place that would become Ark’s food production factory.

“Now that matter is handled.....”

Ark smiled at the receding Space Food Maker and turned around. He crossed Charem as he opened the Nymphe’s information window. Ark smiled and

retrieved the list of his belongings. In fact, Ark had spent quite a bit of money on the food production business. It wasn't just reassembling the parts of the machine in the warehouse with Jay. Some key parts needed repairing so he had to exchange a few of them. The parts he bought added up to 300 gold! And the slave collars he presented to the Charenjok also weren't free. It was 1 gold and 50 silver per piece. It added up to approximately 170 gold. Of course it wasn't just simple expenses. It was an investment so he would eventually get it back.

‘It isn't a waste but.....’

The problem was that it caused a disruption to his plan. The agent registration! Ark had 18,650 gold when he went to meet Java. He only needed 250 gold to do the agent registration. He was expecting the quest reward to settle it but instead he spent 470 gold, making the amount required 720 gold.

‘Damn, does this mean I have to postpone the agent registration?’

In fact, there was no reason he had to do the agent registration immediately.

But money wasn't the only thing required to do the agent registration. Each city had a certain number of agents that could be registered. Cities like Tatuine with a high rate of development already had more than half of the agent registration spots taken. Charem was a city that had just joined the federation. However it was the first new city since the release of the game. Moreover, it was designated as an autonomous trade region so the possibilities were endless. A lot of users would be drooling to register as an agent in Charem. Of course, the registration fee was 27,000 gold so there were still be some spots left. But Ark still needed to search for the Murat ruins with Milan. If he left Charem then there was no guarantee when he could return. If everybody bought the licenses in the meantime then Ark would lost the opportunity to register at a 30% discount. This was the reason why Ark was in a hurry.

‘The probability of all the agent registration cards being sold out is slim. But there is no guarantee that it will be unsold. I have to register as an agent before leaving Charem!’

That was some time ago. Now a message signalling good news appeared in his Nymphe.

-The <RPG PW-600 (Magic)> registered with the auction has been sold for 150 gold.

-The <Ray Steel-??? (Unique)> registered with the auction has been sold for 600 gold.

It was the RPG PW-600 and Ray Steel-??? that he obtained from the control tower! He had registered the items at the auction. Sometimes the bids were cheaper than the market price but it meant he could get the money immediately. He also earned 50 gold from the various japtem found in the control tower. Therefore Ark gained 800 gold and his money increased to 18,980 gold!

‘.....Finally!’

He managed to prepare the agent registration fee. While he was thinking this, Ark arrived in front of Charem’s registration office. It was a place that his eyes had looked at many times but he had never been able to enter. But this time he unabashedly opened the door and entered.

“I came to register as an agent!”

His voice echoed through the interior. The agent registration that had been Ark’s goal! He judged that it was essential to oppose Lucifer. However, registering as an agent didn’t guarantee success. There was no guarantee that the business would succeed after it was started. It was the risk with all businesses.

‘But nothing can be done until this is started. And everybody needs to take

risks in life!’

He had planned the agent registration with that resolution. He had finally came here after all his troubles so it was natural that he would have a loud voice.....

The alien official with green skin frowned and said.

“Your voice will damage other people. Can you speak quieter?”

“Ah, yes.....”

“You came to register as an agent? Input your name and recognition code in the terminal.”

“Ah, yes.....”

Beep, beep, beep, beep.

“Your name is Ark. You are registered with the galactic federation as a 1st class citizen. You have achieved some merit in Charem so Ark-nim will be exempt from the tax and will receive a 30% discount when registering as an agent. The calculated total is 18,900 gold. If you complete the deposit then the registration card will be issued. Of course we don’t allow paying in instalments. Do you have the money?”

“Here it is.”

“Please put it in the counterfeit detection machine.”

“Ah, yes.....”

Clink, clink, clink.

“18, 900 gold. It is confirmed. Finally, please register the name of the agent.”

“Ah, yes.....”

Beep, beep, beep, beep.

“It has been registered. This memory chip contains the registration card, the

instructions, obligations and operating manual. When connecting with the Nymphe, you can access the government's database and get the necessary services. Please inquire with the staff if you have questions about any other matters.”

“Ah, yes.....”

“Then next person please.”

Ark was dismissed and left the counter. He gathered the funds from the Royal Guards, suffered while saving Charem, received the 30% discount, gathered the 18,900 gold and he had finally registered as an agent. But the agent registration was different than what he expected. He inputted his name, took out the money and received the registration card. He felt empty for some reason.

“Although what else can I expect from an official servant?”

The officials were just receiving their pay checks and waiting until they could retire. They wouldn't understand the heart of an average citizen who had to scrape together the money to start a business. And Ark also had no interest in the attitude of the civil servant. Anyway, he had finally completed the agent registration.

“I'm the boss!”

Ark laughed and loaded the registration card onto his Nymphe.

-Agent registration has been completed!

The galactic federation also gives the opportunity to participate in government projects in order to encourage the general public to explore the universe. Usually this requires real estate or businesses but users can skip this if they pay a registration fee. Pioneers who register without a particular business will be registered as an ‘agent.’

If you register as an agent then you are qualified to participate in various

quests that will give city merit. In some cases it can also lead to opportunities to participate in quests given by the government. However, the agent's biggest benefit is the right to invest in the relevant city. In addition, if they succeed in clearing a new frontier for development then they will be given the right to invest in it depending on their contribution. Of course, this contribution will also include the CEO and staff (see terms and conditions of your sponsor). If you invest in a city or a cleared frontier then you can receive the suitable dividends from it. Therefore many agents will recruit promising staff that have the ability to help clear frontiers.

The number of staff hired will be determined by the level of the agent. The CEO and staff can raise the level of the agent through Adventure points.

Therefore continuously develop your business.

- + The right to hire employees.
- + The right to invest in the assigned city.
- + The right to invest in a frontier based on contribution points.
- + The right to receive special quests from the assigned city and the government.

+ Agent: Dark Eden (Lv. 1) +

CEO: Ark (R-02788) Assigned City: Charem

Assigned Employees: 0/15

* Possible areas of investments and investment situation: Charem (0/3%), Beltana (0/5%)

* Regular income from the investment: –

* Regular expenditure: –

* Profit and Loss quarter: –

Dark Eden! This was the company name that Ark decided on. Dark Eden was the name of the organization he built in New World so it would be a solid foundation for a new organization. Anyway! The agent window was a poor contrast to the information window. He felt like he was finally starting after seeing the information window. But unlike other users, Ark could invest in areas other than the assigned cities. It was Beltana! He was given this right when he became Beltana's Hero. He had the right to invest in 5% of it!

“Well I can't do anything yet with no money.....”

Ark looked at his bag that was much lighter and clicked his tongue. So far agent registration was his name. But it wasn't the end once he registered as an agent. He needed 18,900 gold to register as an agent but that wasn't the end of it. He needed to invest more to generate revenue. In order to fight against competitors he needed to invest more in cities and frontiers in order to get a higher return. It was just starting now! Ark had entered an unlimited competition against other CEOs. He had to tighten his belt even further. It was a long future in front of him but there was an unexpected smile on Ark's mouth.

“I'm starting to see the path!”

So far he had been wandering but now he had found his direction. He was still exploring the frontier and earning money but his attitude towards it had changed.

“Now, next.....”

–*W-well?*

Bakum asked with a worried look. Ark grinned and nodded.

“It is beyond my expectations.”

–*R-really? Is it really okay?*

“Yes, if it is to this degree then we can sell it for 40, no 50 copper.”

–*Ooh! That’s it! We did it!*

–*Now we have some hope!*

Cries burst out from the crowd of octopuses after they heard Ark’s answer. Ark also looked at the octopuses with a warm expression. In front of him was a small, rectangular shaped Space Food. After registering as an agent, Ark left Charem to check the food created by the Space Food Machine.

‘To be honest I have been worried.....’

Currently most of the Space Foods in the galactic federation were created with the space bugs that Ark hunted on R-14. But fish were the only ingredients that the Charenjok could obtain so he was worried about the result. Yet the prototype was more than he expected! General Space Food created with space bugs only increased satiety by 20%. But the Charenjok’s food increased it by 40%! It was double the amount of satiety. Space Food that recovered that much would go for at least 30 copper. That wasn’t all. General Space Foods were bland pieces of protein chunks with no flavour. This one was created using fish and it had a fish paste taste.

“I’m also surprised.”

Jay muttered while munching away at the fish paste bar.

“I’ve been eating the Space Food made with space bugs so I thought it was natural. But the taste actually changes depending on the ingredient. Come to think of it, I heard that the early pioneers used ingredients from the alien planet to create food. Once DNA manipulation made mass production of

space bugs available, the price of food gradually went down.”

This was the reason food made with space bugs became generalized through the universe. The mass production of the space bugs also made the price plunge to 10 copper. But there were some Space Foods densely packed that increased satiety by 100% and those went for 50 copper. That was when he was just talking about the NPCs. In this world NPCs and users were distinctly different. NPCs might eat for survival but players were used to eating delicious things. Some would even drive 20~30 minutes to dine at an expensive restaurant. He said 50 copper but Space Food with taste could be sold for 60 or 70 copper.

‘This is marketable!’

In addition, it was a product that had no competitors! Even if other users knew this fact, they didn’t have the machine that cost thousands of gold to produce the required amounts. There was also the cost of labour and ingredients. Yet Ark had the 112 SCV so he didn’t need to worry about labour costs.

‘If I have a monopoly on something then I can adjust the price. Furthermore, the taste varies according to the ingredients so I can develop other goods!’

That was Ark’s guess.

-Space Food (Bellos’ Egg)

Space Food created with a Bellos’ Egg.

Some nutrients were lost while removing the toxins but it still recovers a significant amount of health.

<Satiety +60%, Health and Mental Power will recover by 500 for 3 minutes>

* Your resistance to various abnormal stats has increased by 15% for 1 hour.

That was what emerged when he inserted the Bellos' Egg.

'It's not a joke! This is worth at least 1 gold. No, I can sell this for 3~4 gold!'

If he could produce food like this then revenue would increase tremendously. But it was impossible for the octopuses to obtain the Bellos' Egg when even Ark had trouble. Besides, the fish were a lot easier to get than the Bellos' Egg. No, it was better to have 24 hour production using fish as the ingredient.

'Mass production is possible but it is amazing that I can create special food by changing the ingredients. One day I might be able to find some ingredients that can be commercialized. Right now it is still the starting phase so it is better to concentrate on mass producing the fish paste bars.'

Ark started to earnestly consult with Bakum about the fish paste bar business.

"The price for the moment will be 50 copper. It might be a little more expensive but the most important thing is to invite customers. We will fix the price after seeing the reactions of the customers and consulting again."

–But will it be okay selling it for 50 copper?

"At first it will be tough. However it will sell once they taste the flavour. It is necessary to trademark it as different from other space foods. A little more diversification will be good but right now we need to focus on the fish paste bars."

–That feeling when I ate it.....I agree with the product.

The octopuses decided on the fish paste bar being the trademark.

"Like I said in the beginning, I will receive 30% of the proceeds as rent for the machine. Is that okay?"

–Of course. We couldn't even begin this if it wasn't for you.

“Then that’s fine.”

The business negotiation was finished! At the same time the octopuses poured a heap of caught fish into the machine. The fish paste bars started emerging onto a rail in the front. 1 fish paste bar cost 50 copper and 120 were made every hour. That was 2,880 in one day. A total of 14 gold and 40 silver! Ark would get 4 gold a day! Of course, this also wasn’t free. There was the 800 gold quest reward from Java and the parts replacement costs that was 300 gold. That was a total of 1,100 gold. Even gaining 4 gold a day would take nearly 3 months to earn back. However, if he secured the customers then he could raise the price. And there was also room to develop new goods. He would soon gain back double or triple his investment!

‘Food is the most basic of supplies so it is a reliable investment. There is no need to worry about it failing. There is nothing better to choose as Dark Eden’s first business. Plus.....’

Ark had obtained something he didn’t think possible in the process. Let’s go back in time to when Ark first proposed the space food manufacturing business.

–Our purpose is to obtain the ransom for Tuntun’s group but we also want jobs. While hiding in this place, we never knew when we would be caught or eaten by monsters. Yet we secured our safety and even got jobs thanks to you. You gave us the means to save our family. Do you understand what this means to us?

Bakum placed his octopus legs on Ark’s shoulder with a thrilled expression. Then he sighed and continued.

–That’s why I regret our circumstances even more. You are our saviour. That we can’t even give you some token of gratitude.....

Bakum murmured with a bitter look. Then a young octopus approached.

–M-my treasure.....I’ll give it to you.

And he held out an old fashioned toy with an embarrassed look. An adult octopus then shouted with surprise.

-This guy! What kind of humiliating thing are you doing? I'm sorry. He is young and just wanted to thank you with something. Don't pay attention to it. Rather.....we've gathered some things from the lake.....would you like to take something from it?

The adult octopuses started lining up some japtem. Once again, while looking for Charem Ark had obtained various japtem from the lake. The octopuses lived here for several years and also found some japtem. It was these japtem that the octopuses were placing in front of him. Among them were some things he could pick. If he collected everything then he could get 10 gold for it. However Ark didn't pay any attention to such items.

"No it's fine."

-You don't like these either?

"That's not what I mean."

Ark shook his head and said.

"Have you already forgotten? The reason everyone is working is to free your fellow kin who are Java's slaves. You no longer need to hide so won't you be able to come in and out of Charem? This will earn you some money. How can I possibly receive it?"

-Uhh.....

The octopuses stared with a solemn expression. Then Ark knelt down next to the young octopus.

"And I feel like this toy contains more sincerity. Of course this toy isn't worth 1 copper! But it is probably the most precious treasure to this child. How can I not take this gift as proof of the Charenjok's friendship? Thank you. I will keep this and think of you every time I see it."

Ark patted the young octopus' head and received the toy. The other octopuses started exclaiming.

-Ohh....indeed!

-As expected from the human that Elder Bakum recognizes!

-To be honest I thought he had some ulterior motive when giving us the slave collar but.....I'm so ashamed. I misunderstood his sincerity!

-I'm sorry. I was too short-sighted.

-I'll believe and follow you!

-Intimacy with the Charenjok has increased by 100!

His intimacy increased! He made a lot of progress with the Charenjok after giving them the slave collars and negotiating a 30% rent. But the truth was different from what the octopuses thought.

‘There’s no doubt! This is similar to the toy that I was given on R-14!’

Ark had gained Sonic Sword and Set Bullets Shooting from a hidden journal in that toy airplane. The toy that young octopus gave him was similar. So items worth 10 gold didn’t matter. No, even items worth 100 gold didn’t reflect in his eyes!

‘The Charenjok have other toys.’

It couldn’t be a coincidence.

“Where did you get this from?”

Ark quickly asked while the octopuses were still exclaiming. The young octopus scratched his head and said.

-I got it from my Father. It was a toy from the past and he divided it with his friend.

“Do you have more of these toys?”

–No. I heard that he separated with the friend he gave the toy to while leaving our home planet Charen.

It was the same as the toy he obtained from R-14. Ark’s guess was correct.

-You have obtained an Undisclosed Memory Chip.

There are different memory chips with various types of information in Galaxian. Connect the memory chip to the Nymphe to access the information.

Enter the security code or use Invaders to hack and release the lock.

Attempt to hack? Y/N

He solved the puzzle of the toy and found another memory chip. Ark found the memory chip 10 minutes after receiving the toy. And unlike before, he had the skill to hack it straight away.....

‘My Nymphe became strange when I hacked the memory chip the other time.’

There was no guarantee the same thing wouldn’t happen again. So Ark hadn’t been able to verify the information on the memory chip he obtained. That was the reason that Ark grabbed Jay. He remembered that Tori said he could fix Ark’s Nymphe. Tori was the owner of a junkyard and Jay was the head of research in Charem so it was possible he would know what to do.

In other words, Jay was his contingency.

“Jay-nim”

Ark headed towards Jay once the octopuses earnestly started manufacturing food. And showed him the memory chip.

“I want to ask you something. I want to check the contents of this memory

chip but my Nymphe experienced some problems when I connected a different memory chip to it. Can you check if there are any viruses in the data?”

“Of course.”

Jay received the memory chip and connected it to his Nymphe. And he manipulated the Nymphe for a while.

“There are no viruses in the data. However it is the Rama’s OS.”

“Rama’s OS?”

“Yes, if the previous memory chip was similar then that is probably the problem. Nymphes provided by the federation are made so that they conflict with the Rama’s OS. It technically isn’t that serious. The federation deliberately added this feature. Because it belongs to hostile forces. In fact, all you need to do is add a simple language patch to the automatic translation function and it should function normally with the Rama’s OS.”

Dudong!

That was the reason his Nymphe broke!

‘In the end the owner of the data was a Rama? Then why does the Charenjok.....?’

One question was answered and another one arose. But there was no way to figure out how the octopuses got the toys. And it didn’t matter if the Rama or the Charenjok were the owners of the data. The important thing was to make the memory chip secure so he could download it!

“Is there a way to install the patch on my Nymphe?”

“It’s not a hard job. Are lot of merchants in Charem were Rama so the patch spread around. I can’t release the lock on the memory chip but I can add the patch.”

“Please do it for me.”

“As I said this is not a hard job.”

Jay grinned and connected their Nymphes. And he manipulated the Nymphe for a while.

“Eh? You have the patch already?”

“I have the patch?”

“Yes, it is different from my patch but you clearly have the Rama language on your Nymphe. Have you ever understood the words of a Rama without an interpreter?”

“That’s right.....”

“Then you 100% have a patch.”

‘A patch that is compatible with the Rama’s OS.....when did it.....ah, perhaps?’

He was reminded of something while contemplating. In the past his OS was deleted and installed again, making it return to normal. In order to receive the prisoner’s coating, his Nymphe needed a new OS.

‘If the data downloaded was made with the Rama’s OS.....and the old OS remained when overwriting it.....yes, I could understand a Rama’s words without an interpreter from that point onwards. But there is even more. My Nymphe needs to be compatible with a Rama’s in order to use Hyper Drone. It is apparent that the data gave me the language patch!’

Dudong!

The secret was finally revealed after a long time.

“So there is no problem downloading it?”

“Yes, I guarantee it.”

Jay replied with a smile.

‘That’s it. I can receive the data with no problem and I can leave the food

manufacturing to the Charenjok. Now it is time for Milan and the Murat ruins!’

In fact, Ark had received 10 emails at once when Charem was registered as an autonomous trade region and connected to the federation’s network. The emails were sent by Milan. Ark replied that he would meet Milan in Nabe to save time. And all his work here was done.

“But did Jay-nim want something?”

Ark asked Jay before preparing to leave for Nabe. Jay scratched his head before saying.

“In fact.....I wanted to discuss something with Ark-nim.”

“Huh? Discuss?”

“You see, that is.....”

Jay mumbled something before suddenly lifting his head with a determined expression.

“Ark-nim, can you hire me?”

“Eh? J-Jay-nim?”

“Yes! This is a request! Ah, don’t get me wrong. I’m not doing this because of what happened with Java yesterday. I’m impressed by Ark-nim.”

“Impressed.....what.....?”

“Honestly I felt despair when walking into that warehouse and discovering Java’s trick. But Ark-nim didn’t give up. In the end you made a Space Food Maker from a pile of trash and beat Java. Ah, it really was exciting!”

Jay said gleefully.

“But there’s even more. I survived in hell due to the Charenjok and I wanted to somehow return the favour. Yet there was nothing I could do against Java. Unlike me, Ark-nim prepared a realistic way to save the Charenjok. Frankly I

just thought about selling the machine to free the Charenjok but then Ark-nim came to this village. Rather than giving fish to a hungry man, you taught him how to fish! You gave the Charenjok methods to live.”

He was mistaken. Ark’s choices were due to money. Of course, he didn’t break the illusion of respect that person had.

“That’s not the only reason why I want you to hire me.”

There were even more reasons.

“Other people might not know but I do. It isn’t an exaggeration to say that Ark-nim saved Charem alone. Didn’t you also mediate the dispute between the federation and Aschulat? I decided after I heard that story. This person, unlike Java this person is someone that I can follow and sincerely believe in. So please accept.”

“No, saying something like that out of the blue.....”

Ark was a little baffled by the abrupt proposal. However it was quite fortunate when he thought about it. Jay was the former head of Charem’s research. He was an engineer with a significantly high level. And he already identified Jay’s ability in Java’s warehouse. Jay was the one who restored the machine while Ark gathered the parts. It was no different from gathering junk and making a machine out of it. Significant levels of skills were probably required.

‘He might not be good in combat but his skills might be an advantage. The agent registration finished so now Dark Eden is a business. We have no capital in the beginning stages so I don’t need to hire mercenaries yet.’

Galaxian was a SF fantasy genre. A person dealing with machines and programs was probably required.

‘And this will be Dark Eden’s food factory so he can be useful in many ways. If the Space Food Maker working 24 hr/day broke then Jay can repair it immediately. But the problem is.....’

Money. He wouldn't work for free even if he respected Ark. Furthermore, he was a NPC so the pay check will be higher. But Jay settled it with his next words.

“I don't expect you to hire me just because I asked. I want to spend 3 months as your intern. The revenue from the food factory will increase by at least 50% in the meantime. My employment salary can be determined then.”

He had no need to worry with those conditions.

“Thank you!”

Ark shook Jay's hand. So Jay had the honour of being Dark Eden's first staff.

-Jay has joined Dark Eden as an intern.

Name: Jay (NPC ☆ ☆) Profession: Engineer

Level: 78 Related Skills: Mechanical
Engineering, Research.....

Jay's information was registered on the card.

Ark appointed Jay the manager of the food factory and headed to the lake.

“It's been a while.”

Ark muttered as he took out the air board. Charem's Star Gate wasn't active yet so shuttles moved from nearby cities. There was a shuttle to Nabe but it wasn't free. The amount was a burden so.....

“From now on I have to save as much money as possible. I need to tighten my belt even more!”

Ark got on the air board and cried out.

“Let's go! Super Board!”

While Ark headed back to Nabe.

In the highest level of the control tower while Charem's recovery operation was in full swing. Voices flowing from the Nymphe were mixed with the voices of the workmen.

–You sneaked in safely.

“Charem's security system wasn't maintained so it was easy. There were no problems reaching the highest level using my counterfeit ID. But.....”

–Are there other problems?

“There isn't anything here.”

–That's impossible. I received information that the merchant sold it directly to the Lord of Charem. Charem was sealed shortly after that. It was probably the cause of Charem's situation. Charem's situation is evidence that it was there.

“Yes, that's right. One of the researchers probably checked it secretly. But it has disappeared. No, it is broken to be precise.”

The Nymphe was silent. Then he replied after a while.

–It isn't possible to break that with a bomb. This means someone broke the seal and got their hands on the contents. Can you guess who that person is?

“Not one of the people seemed to have an opportunity. The other person is the mercenary Java dispatched to solve the problem.”

–The name?

“He is called Alan.”

–Alan.....

The voice over the Nymphe murmured.

–If he really broke the seal then he must already have one or more artefacts. A person has appeared who might cause significant setbacks to our plan. Good work. I will check on this Alan.

“Thank you.”

–And I got some new information. I sent you some pictures but it really is unbelievable. I’ll send you the GPS information so sneak out of Charem and head there. Keep this in mind. We have our duty as the representative of the Great God to bring true rest to the galaxy. The time won’t be far away.

“Yes, the Great God willing.”

“The Great God willing.”

Mt. Fargo

“Huhuhuhu.”

Ark couldn't stop laughing. He was rapidly crossing the Outlands on his air board. In fact, the reason Ark hadn't taken the Charem-Nabe shuttle wasn't just because of money. The airship flight time was much slower than the Star Gate's spatial movement but it was cheaper. 1 copper was still a huge amount for Ark but.....

It had been over a fortnight since Ark received Milan's notification that the slab was restored. If he considered that point then it might be easier to pay the price of the shuttle. Nevertheless, Ark had his own reasons for crossing the Outlands.

‘It is important to find the new Murat ruins but I should get a hang of what I already have.’

It was the pyramid he obtained from Charem's laboratory.

‘After listening to the video in the pyramid then I can obtain a new rune just like on Beltana.’

However Ark still hadn't released the pyramid. When he first got his hands on the pyramid, he hadn't registered with the pyramid and couldn't be assured that he would survive. And he had put it off until now because he needed to clean up the Sufferers incident, registering as an agent and establishing the food manufacturing plant. There was no reason to rush. He could obtain it at any time. Leaving something for later would make it tastier. If he could afford it then he would like to act slowly.

‘And nothing might happen even if the Shire appears. I didn't know how to use the Ikram rune for a long time. Getting a skill I don't know how to use will make me anxious. So I should check the skill in better conditions.’

This was the reason he decided to walk. He intended to try out the new rune in the Outlands overflowing with monsters. While crossing the land on the air board, he opened the bottom of the pyramid and the light emerged.

The mysterious power of the Murat, the Shire!

“Come out Shire!”

Ark had experienced it already so he touched it with his hand. And the moment his hand touched the Shire!

-You have absorbed the photon life form ‘Shire!’

The Shire are mysterious photon life forms and are some of the most mysterious creatures in the universe. According to old documents, they will condense over millions of years to form mana. The Murat have the ability to use the power of the Shire through ‘Rune’ characters.

+ You have absorbed the Shire and acquired a Rune.

+ You have acquired a Rune (Immortal) from the Murat memory contained.

Up to here it was identical to the previous time. However there was a crucial difference between the old and new rune.

-A new skill (Common Occupation ☆☆☆☆☆) has been learnt.

Rune Carving- Immortal (User, Passive): the runes used by the Murat have the ability to extract the potential of the photon life form Shire. Therefore the Shire can store the memory of the runes. The Immortal rune is the symbol of Osiris who sought eternal life. Thus the Immortal Rune has imprinted the source of life on your body, mana. Those who already use mana will gain 100 mana while those that don’t will have 50 mana generated. And the maximum amount can rise every time you absorb new Shire.

+ 50 mana has been generated with the Immortal rune.

+ 25 additional mana has been gained for the Shire from the Ikram rune.

“Eh?”

Ark’s eyes looked shocked. The new rune was a passive skill! Ark hurriedly opened the character information window.

Character Information Window			
Name	Ark (R-02788)	Level	79
Species	Human	Occupation	Pioneer
Fame	5,820	Adventure	720
Mana	75		
Health	1,850 (+90)	Mental Power	1,000 (+75)
Strength	180 (+23)	Agility	245
Stamina	335 (+18)	Wisdom	20 (+5)
Intelligence	160 (+15)	Luck	35
* Title			
Cleaning Foreman (Agility + 3)			
Ignorant Destroyer (Wisdom -10, Strength +7, Stamina +7)			
Beltana’s Hero (Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence, Luck +3)			

Mediator (Wisdom, Intelligence +15)
* Contribution: Galactic Federation 6,850, Aschulat 500 * Affiliation: Dark Eden (CEO)
*Body Coating: Survivor + Environmental adaptation increases by 50% due to the Survivor coating. + The Survivor coating reduces the drop rate of Satiety by 30%. + The Survivor coating will reduce fall damage by 50%. +The 'Clairvoyance' effect of the Survivor coating is applied.

He had checked it once before leaving Charem so it wasn't necessary to see most of it. The important thing was.....

“The mana stat was really created!”

The mana stat was sitting in his character information window! Ark could now use mental power and mana. Mental power was the basic power that all users in the federation used. However some users didn't stop there. Some users would receive magic when they received the body coating that was classified as the magician type. But in those cases mental power would disappear. Warriors used mental power while magicians used mana. This was common sense in Galaxian. However Ark had preserved the mental power stat when mana was added. This meant he was a warrior but he could learn skills associated with magicians! It meant he was a magic warrior in fantasy terms. Of course he wasn't yet at the standard of a magic warrior. Usually

magicians got 200~300 mana when they received the body coating. Depending on the bonuses added by intelligence and wisdom, they would get at least 500 mana to start with. Currently Ark only had 75 mana. It was only 25% of the mana that Espers started off with.

‘But!’

He still received it!

“Now I don’t need to wear the battle suit to use the Ikram rune.

The Ikram rune that summoned the hell hound! It was a fairly good 5 star skill but it hadn’t been really useful so far. That’s because the skill couldn’t be used unless he wore the battle suit. Now he didn’t need to wear the battle suit to summon the hell hound. Of course there were some restrictions. The Ikram rune consumed 10% of the battle suit’s mana when he used it. He could only summon a maximum of 9 hell hounds. The mana stat might be generated but he would only be able to summon 1 hell hound. Ark had only been looking at the ‘%’ of the battle suit’s mana but the Ikram rune consumed 50 mana. Even if it was 1 hell hound, the utilization couldn’t be compared to before.

“Besides, if I obtain more Shire then my mana will increase!”

There was no reason to lament over having low mana. He was satisfied with the result.

“Although this is kind of ambiguous.....”

Ark eyed the memory chip. It was the memory chip that Jay said was safe to download. Of course Ark had already checked the contents of the memory chip. Ark had been more interested in the memory chip than the pyramid. It was because he expected to learn skills like Sonic Sword and Set Bullets Shooting. He had released the lock with hacking and downloaded the data to his Nymph.

-# Logbook 01~03 page has been downloaded.

The previous memory chip contained the logbook 4~6 pages. If he looked at the page numbers then this was the first part of the previous logbook. But when he read it the contents seemed like it was the end.

Logbook~01

How long ago.....

When I think back to the beginning, my journey began from a bitter betrayal. The fact that this betrayal came from someone of my blood made it a lot harder for me.

Why.....

It was a question that I asked countless times. But no one answered. Therefore I felt even more hurt and frustration when I thought of something. Is it possible that they didn't understand either? It was the first time I thought this. I've been wandering about this question for a long time.

Right now a large number of disputes are spreading through the galaxy. I've thought about it and the dispute must've started somewhere. Teacher-nim always said it. Don't believe your eyes and search for the truth. This is the mission entrusted to us. Teacher-nim's words have been a big consolation for me.

If the truth is different from what I thought then I might be able to relieve this miserable feeling. But I was wrong. The truth I discovered was scarier than I imagined. Its true name caused huge despair. And I found myself in front of a door. Any souls who step close would be swallowed up in despair.

But I can't stop. I have to spread the truth to the large number of species in this universe. However, if I step foot in 'that' then there is almost no chances of coming back alive. I'm not afraid to die but I need to pass on the mission

that I've inherited.

That's why I'm leaving this logbook. If anyone....even if it takes hundreds of years, I hope that an adventurer will find this. If someone sees these writings then I'll tell you in advance.

Discovering the truth will drop you into despair. Nevertheless.....if an adventurer who discovers this logbook has the courage to find the truth.....then you and I are tied by the same thread of fate that transcends space and time.....if you look for it then you will inevitably reach my hometown.....

My experience and knowledge will be helpful to you at that time.

Lock- <Sealed Contents of a Quest> -Lock

This was the contents of pages 1~2. That was written in the first half of the logbook.

‘The truth discovered will cause despair? What does that mean?’

Naturally he was curious. But nothing else about the ‘despair’ was written. And Ark wasn't curious enough to be impatient. This was a game. How many users would read the contents of these pages? If a user was interested then they would eventually get some results. He just needed to wait. But the contents of the 3rd page were sealed. He couldn't accept that so he opened it with hacking.

‘.....What is this?’

An information window he never imagined had appeared in front of him.

<Proof of Qualification (Occupation Quest)>

You have found an old logbook in the Charenjok's toys that have been handed down.

The contents written are obscure and difficult to understand. The only thing determined if that this is the last message of someone sailing on a journey to their death. And the contents were left in data form. But the data is locked by a mysterious force and you must satisfy certain conditions to get it. If you want the prophet's experience and knowledge then you need to prove the four virtues necessary for a true adventurer.

-Proof of Destiny: Obtain 2 logbooks (2/2)

-Proof of Courage: Dispose of monsters higher level than your own (0/100)

-Proof of Faith: Rescue your colleagues (0/200)

-Proof of Eligibility: Finding a sanctuary (0/1)

“Occupation quest?”

Unlike other games, having an occupation wasn't essential in Galaxian. Other games needed an occupation to receive skills other than the basics but this was taken care of with the body coating. Therefore an occupation was optional.....there was no insistence on picking one in the game. Of course, it might not be required but picking an occupation could give exclusive skills and bonuses. When considering the skill proficiency, it was good to select an occupation earlier. However there were no vocational schools in Galaxian. Unlike other games, Galaxian didn't have occupation related NPCs in each major city. And there was no fixed level or method to receive an occupation. Just like Ark received Heksu's 'Scavenger' or Marquis Martins 'Private' offer, they needed to find clues or the related NPCs to receive an occupation. In other words, all occupations were hidden!

‘.....But.’

They also varied greatly. All occupations might be hidden but the degree of difficulty differed. Occupations like Scavenger was something easily

obtained while 'Private' from an NPC was a lot harder. The bonuses given would also change depending on the difficulty. In the end, even hidden occupations could be sorted into ratings. This was the reason Ark felt ambiguous. When he received the Scavenger or Private offer, he could guess the related skills and bonuses. However this was an occupation quest that he couldn't figure out.

'It is clearly a warrior affiliated occupation!'

This was because he received the Sonic Sword and Set Bullets Shooting from the second part of the logbook.

'And it isn't an easy occupation to acquire. The other parts weren't special but it isn't easy to obtain 2 logbooks. When judging by that point, I have a considerable advantage because I already received the other logbook on R-14. Anyway, the conditions are surprisingly tricky so the occupation might be decent. Just because I accept the quest doesn't mean I need to accept the occupation.'

Ark accepted the quest.

"By the way....."

Ark scratched his head and looked around.

"Doesn't this mean I didn't have to take the air board across the Outlands?"

Ark had decided to cross the Outlands in order to test the skills he would learn from the pyramid and logbook. But he learnt a passive skill from the pyramid and the logbook was an occupation quest.

"Well, I can still use this situation to relieve stress."

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

Then an enormous monster rose from the ground. It was a Hakerion, the monster that Ark had first encountered when coming to the Outlands! He remembered that he had quite a hard time but.....

Seokeok seokeok! Pepeng! Pepeng!

Now there was no need to even get off the air board. A quick double attack shot out from the air board! And the Hakerion soon turned into minced meat. Once again it had been a fortnight since Ark left Nabe. His level and equipment were completely different from when he first entered the Outlands.

“Come on, let’s go! Towards Nabe!”

There were no difficult areas he couldn’t overcome.

Buzz.

The Tatuine noble council. The federation’s nobles had gathered a while ago to hear some shocking news. They had lost Hanan! The planet in the Bellin constellation that had the most military support had collapsed. The council of nobles heard the terrible news and quickly panicked. Just as they were on the verge of mass hysteria, they heard good news that they never considered.

“Really?”

“Yes, I met directly with the Aschulat ambassador and signed an agreement. The Aschulat home planet has already given their approval and is gathering the support army to send.”

“This news is like having rain in a drought!”

The Chairman spoke in an eager voice. However some nobles couldn’t hide their dissatisfied expression.

“But acknowledging the existence of Charem is unacceptable. Right now the smuggling city is like a parasitic lump on the federation. Officially recognizing the city is like going against the legal system. Not to mention the damage that will be done to the merchant association. Who will shoulder the

responsibility for that? I'll tell you in advance but the Department of Domestic Affairs wouldn't shoulder the responsibility!"

The aristocrat who said this was Marquis Jyubel. He was the Minister of Domestic Affairs. Martin looked at Jyubel and nodded.

"It is like Marquis Jyubel said. Although we were promised military support, it is difficult for the federation to recognize Charem's existence. In addition, there is quite a bit of resistance from the merchant association. I realize that I'm responsible for this matter."

A smug smile spread on Jyubel's face after hearing Martin's answer. But that smile didn't last for even 1 minute.

"Naturally I should take all responsibility for those problems. Therefore I'll be in charge of the management of Charem from now on."

"What? But that is a matter for the Domestic Affairs....."

"It is under the jurisdiction of the Domestic Affairs Department. However it is irresponsible of me to dump everything on the Domestic Affairs Department. Didn't Marquis Jyubel also say that someone else should shoulder responsibility? Then the person who has to shoulder the responsibility should be me. I'm the one responsible for the problems with Charem so shouldn't I take care of it?"

"B-but....."

Jyubel stuttered with an upset expression. Naturally this wasn't what Jyubel had been aiming for. He wanted to rebuke Martin while still getting his hands on Charem. Unlike other cities, Charem's growth potential was high. Jyubel's concern was that if Martin gained Charem then his power would also grow rapidly along with the city.

"City management is under the jurisdiction of the Domestic Affairs Department!"

“But you just said that this department won’t be liable for Charem.”

“T-that.....I mean.....”

“I already proposed this to the Prime Minister and received permission. I was worried that this would upset Marquis Jyubel who is in charge of city management but luckily you don’t want responsibility. Thank you. ”

Jyubel couldn’t say anything else.

“Since the Prime Minister approved it, the problem will be handed over to Marquis Martin.”

The Chairman who was watching the two Marquis’ psychological warfare anxiously put the situation in order. And he brought out a different agenda.

“But how are we going to handle this problem?”

“The problem?”

“The video sent by the Rama on Hanan.”

The nobles started buzzing again after hearing those words. The Chairman was talking about the message made from the corpses of federation soldiers. The Rama warrior called the Red Slaughter had sent a challenge to Ark. Most of the nobles already knew about this unprecedented event.

“This is unrelated to the agenda but I would like to hear opinions.”

“It is not worth doing anything.”

Marquis Martin replied without thinking about it.

“This is a war. It is a war where the federation and Rama soldiers risk their lives. Reacting to a message that an enemy soldier sent is foolish.”

“But the opponent is the Red Slaughterer.”

“So that makes it even more difficult. The Red Slaughterer is the Rama’s hero while Ark is designated Beltana’s Hero. Their battle would have a significant impact on the morale of the military. It isn’t necessary to explain

if Ark wins but this defeat would pour cold water on the situation. With this agreement with the Aschulat, the tides of the war will turn in our favour when they send reinforcements. In such a situation there is no need to bother with a risky gamble. So just dismiss and ignore the message from the enemy.”

“.....That makes sense.”

The Chairman nodded his head.

“I understand. Like Lord Martin said, the Aschulat reinforcements will be sent soon.”

The council meeting was ended after that. Marquis Martin received the greetings of some nobles before exiting the assembly hall and saying to his adjutant.

“Do you know what Ark is now?”

“I just know that he left Charem not long ago.”

“From now on keep an eye on Ark’s whereabouts.”

“I understand. But why the sudden interest in Ark? Didn’t you say to ignore the Red Slaughter’s message?”

“I have decided to ignore it, now.”

Martin stopped walking and laughed.

“Soon an even better stage will be prepared. Watch him until then.”

“Hyung-nim!”

Milan greeted him after he arrived in Nabe.

“There were no replies no matter how many emails I sent so I really thought you died!”

Milan complained as soon as he saw Ark's face. If he explained for a moment, the Nymphe was like a smartphone with communication capabilities and other functions attached. The communication range was only 50 km. This was because communication antennas weren't installed anywhere other than cities. There were many electromagnetic pulses outside the area so there were many times when communication failed. This also applied to communication between cities.

There could be problems even if the city had a large communication relay. Therefore there were many constraints to communication through emails. The recipient had to enter the city and link to a relay machine to receive the email. That was why Ark only received Milan's emails once Charem was recovered. It had taken a fortnight. It was natural for Milan to be worried.

"I'm sorry. I was in a situation where I couldn't receive the mail."

"Where on earth did you go.....?"

"I'll explain it slowly. Where is the slab?"

"Here it is."

Milan carefully observed the surroundings and pulled out the slab. When Ark first saw the slab, the surface was considerably damaged and many characters weren't recognizable. But the slab Milan pulled out was neatly written. The slab had been restored using the 3D restoration machine.

"Now then....."

Ark received the slab. The Nymphe vibrated and automatically translated the letters.

—Descendant of the great ruler, you who have inherited the lineage of the Murat.

Although it has been a long since our great blood relatives left, the Elim hasn't forgotten them.

The Elim have left a great legacy in the place where the sun sets and the sun rises for the descendant of the Murat who will someday come! It is for a true pilgrim! Don't hesitate. You will need to prove your qualifications.

But you have to reach that place.

<Secret of the Slab>

You have stumbled across a slab and acquired information about the ancient alien species the Murat.

Numerous alien species have disappeared that weren't recorded in Galaxian's history. The science and technology of these alien species will far transcend the imagination of modern species. Therefore explorers who find historically significant relics can gain wealth and honour.

Of course this doesn't apply to all relics.

Difficulty: ???

A quest was registered on the Nymphe.

‘This slab really is related to a Murat relic!’

In fact, slabs weren't a rare item in Galaxian. The slab was like a treasure map on the frontiers. Actually Ark had found a treasure map while hacking the circuits to raise his skill. But when he visited there, other users and NPCs had already been there and only trivial japtem remained. Therefore there were almost no users that collected slabs anymore. If this was a different time then Ark probably wouldn't care about it. However the slab had Murat letters written on it.

‘So I had some expectations in my heart....’

The slab said that the Murat's legacy was hidden somewhere. The only problem was to find the place referred to on the slab.

“I have to go to the library.”

Ark immediately looked for Nabe’s public library. He said library but it was more like a type of internet that connected to the federation’s enormous data base. The city also had a network that users and NPCs could access but the information there was more general and less reliable. However, the library contained only government-certified materials so the reliability was 99%. Therefore the conditions to use it were difficult.

1st class citizens had to pay 5 gold as an admission fee.

‘5 gold just to browse some materials, what a rip off!’

But now wasn’t the time to save money. Ark paid the 5 gold and entered the library. Despite the expensive fees, quite a few people were running around the library. They were probably people like Ark who came to gather information about a slab or treasure map they found. Therefore reading rooms were created in the library to maintain security.

-What information are you searching for?

A mechanical voice murmured as he entered an empty room. He didn’t need to worry about this. Looking at the contents of the slab, the write was a species called the Elim. The Elim historian stated that the legacy was sealed in a hidden location. Naturally the search keyword would be Elim!

-There is a total of 130 different data retrieved about Elim 35 cases are the names of an item, 63 the name of a person and 3 cases are related to species. 4 are brands.....

“Species.”

-All materials associated with Elim species will be shown.

A huge amount of text popped up in front of him. But there was no reason to read the huge wall of text. He already found the information he desired at the beginning.

–The Elim is the name of an indigenous people that used to live on Istana.

According to the records, the Elim were people granted special powers by the gods and helped keep the peace on Istana. But the Elim suddenly disappeared hundreds of years before humanity migrated here.

Why they disappeared is still a mystery. Not much is known about the Elim but according to information recently registered by pioneers, they worship at the place where two suns intersect around a dormant volcano called Fargo.....

He had a feeling as soon as he read those words. Istana has two suns, one large and one small sun. They moved around a different orbit so there were points where the two suns overlapped. That was the dormant volcano Fargo! The place written on the slab where the sun set and the sun rose.

“The location of Mt. Fargo.”

The GPS coordinates were transmitted to Ark.

“The result is good despite wasting money.”

Spending a bit of money will sometimes release a lot. Milan also nodded after explaining it to him.

“In my opinion Mt. Fargo also seems to fit.”

“Okay. Then let’s do the necessary preparations to leave.”

He had finally figured out the location of the new Murat ruins. There was no reason to delay. But Mt. Fargo was 1,800 km away. Furthermore, Ark’s air board only had the ability to move 1 person. Therefore Ark was forced to tearfully take the shuttle to the pioneer village nearest to Mt. Fargo.

‘I need to gain some capital!’

Ark once again became motivated when his pockets became lighter. Ark finished making his preparations at the sector. When he left the sector the atmosphere had completely changed. The Outlands were filled with strange

trees and bushes. Completely different types of flora and fauna grew in the Outlands. Ark had only experienced a small fraction of the Outlands. The swamps around Mt. Fargo contained thorny vines that wrapped around the body and contained venom as well as other natural traps.

“It is dangerous out there. There are black plants that discharge poisonous gases instead of drawing in air. And some bushes will cause you to lose consciousness suddenly.”

Milan was a NPC that specialized as a treasure hunter. Milan’s experience was a considerable help in the Outlands. However Ark wasn’t the type to follow behind Milan.

Chi chi chi chi! Chi chi chi chi!

Red eyes appeared in the shadow of the forest. The Outlands were infested with monsters. The monsters in the forest zone were stronger than the monsters around the northern lake. They were 10 levels higher than the Bellos. But Ark wasn’t the same as his previous self.

“Back off!”

Ark instantly swiped through the bushes. The monster was shattered by his attacks.

“Hyung-nim, what happened in the meantime? You became stronger.”

A light of respect dawned in Milan’s eyes. As a treasure hunter, Milan needed to explore the frontier so he had strong combat power. No, he was even higher level than Ark on Beltana. Ark was weaker but Milan had followed him in order to obtain food. And Milan was pardoned so he only remembered his original impression of Ark. Now he realized that Ark was different from the warrior he met on Beltana. But Milan was impressed for a separate reason.

“Heok! T-this! Hyung-nim!”

“It’s dangerous! Ugh!”

When Milan was in a crisis, Ark would run down and protect him. This made Milan recall his memories of Beltana.

‘As expected, Hyung-nim is different from other people. He changed the situation by gaining food and gathering colleagues. I received Hyung-nim’s favour but I didn’t completely believe in him. But Hyung-nim has changed. He is stronger compared to Beltana and I can now consider him a colleague.’

Ark laughed as he shed blood. He could smile with accomplishment despite being hurt when saving his colleague! Milan’s respect increased by 100 times! He was so impressed that tears gushed out. However, that wasn’t the reason for Ark’s laugh.

‘As I expected.’

-Proof of Faith: Rescue your colleagues (1/200)

It was the completion condition for the quest he received not long ago! He could accomplish it by saving his colleagues. But Milan didn’t know the circumstances and couldn’t help being impressed.

‘To be honest, I thought those guys will stupid for following Hyung-nim even after leaving Beltana. Now I believe in Hyung-nim! I will follow him to the end!’

And the heart was determined. There were a large number of traps and monsters but they couldn’t stop the two men whose friendship had solidified. He spent two days passing through thick greenery.

“Hyung-nim!”

Milan calculated the coordinates and lifted his head. He then pointed to a hill a short distance away with a thrilled expression.

“Over there! That hill is Mt. Fargo!”

He had finally arrived at his destination.

“Finally! Let’s go!”

Ark and Milan hurriedly jumped up the hill. But their faces warped strangely the moment they arrived at the top.

“Huk! W-what the hell?”

In That Place

The universal space treaty.

Shortly after the 1st Space War ended, the three powers signed a special treaty. One of the conditions of the treaty was that they were banned from developing technology like the 'TK' that would deal tremendous damage to the military of all 3 powers. Another part of the treaty involved unexplored planets. When resources were found on an undeveloped planet that belonged to none of the powers then the right would belong to the nation of the pioneer that first discovered it. This was to avoid an unnecessary war of attrition and to encourage space pioneering. Whoever found it would grasp extravagant wealth and honour! Many pioneers headed to the frontier dreaming of a jackpot. Naturally pioneer villages called Sectors started to form in the Outlands. Irrespective of species! Irrespective of the past! If you have the money then it is OK! This was the location of the space station (Hive). On one hive called Kwain was a tavern.

'Shut up.....'

A woman sighed and frowned. The tavern was filled with cigarette smoke and music. Her ears were tingling from the chaotic, loud noises of aliens drinking alcohol. She usually preferred quiet places so this was a hardship for her.

'I should end this mission quickly.....'

She sat down with a tense expression.

"Hey babe."

Someone said from behind her. She turned around and saw a man that looked like a gorilla.

"I've been watching you just now and I like what I see. I'm Kurakan. If you

mention my name in this are then there is no one who doesn't know it. How about it? Would you like to have a drink with me? Well, it is good if you're inclined. As you can see I'm a person with a lot of fame."

"I'm sorry but I don't have time to play with a gorilla."

"What, what the? Gorilla?"

"If you are an orangutan then I apologize."

"H-how dare you.....?"

The gorilla snorted with anger and grabbed her. No, he wanted to grab her.

Cheolkeok!

A muzzle was pressed against the gorilla's head. The Hive was no different from a lawless zone. Pioneers who didn't notice this didn't last long in a place like this. The gorilla realized the situation and immediately raised both arms.

"Eh? You should've said if you have a companion....."

"I don't want to make a lot of noise so get lost."

"Yes! Of course!"

The gorilla quickly ran out of the tavern. People in the tavern didn't even look up at the commotion. That's because incidents were common in the Hive. The woman turned around after the gorilla left and asked.

"Did you check?"

"The Katz were clearly here."

The man with the gun answered before sitting down opposite her.

"Are you sure?"

"There is no doubt. According to the testimony of the staff working at the port, the identification code and mark on the side of the transport ship clearly

belonged to the galactic federation.”

“You’re speaking in the past tense.”

“I confirmed that they met someone here. But they already left 3 days before we arrived.”

“We’re one step too late.”

The woman sighing was Irina. The reason she came to Kwain was because she received the mission to track down the prisoners who escaped from Stael during the riot. She came across information that they headed to Kwain and tracked them here. However they had already moved to a different location.

“Do you have any other information?”

“There is something slightly strange.”

Her assistant Camel scratched his head.

“According to the staff at the port, there is another species mixed in with the Katz clan. It was a hamster like alien from the Tiny clan.”

“One of the prisoners who collapsed from Stael was from the Tiny clan.”

“I also thought that.”

“But what is strange?”

“That guy handed this to the staff just before the Katz left. He told them to give it to the person looking for him.”

Irina’s face warped after she read the note that Camel gave her.

Please help!

I have been kidnapped by evil guys!

Specific coordinates were also included.

“What do you think?”

“The hamster like Tiny and the cat like Katz.....”

The corners of Irina's mouth rose quietly.

“But the coordinates written is weighing on my mind. Do you know? This is where.....”

“I'm aware of that. I'm not going to run away because of the location. But the people they met here are weighing on my mind. They might have a different purpose that we don't know about. Well we have no other information so we'll go to that location for the moment.”

Irina stood up like she didn't find it necessary to worry. All of a sudden 4 people interrupted them when they left the tavern.

“Hey, are you just leaving?”

The person in the front was the gorilla Kurakan.

“Didn't I tell you? I'm a well-known person in Kwain. You're mistaken if you think you can escape after humiliating me. You're chicken who just entered the universe and I'll teach you how scary it can be. Especially you! I will give you 1-on-1 training all night. Hihihhi!”

“This damn gorilla.....!”

Camel growled and grabbed his gun. Irina shook her head and stepped forward.

“It's okay. I'll handle this.”

“Huh? But.....”

“I also want to relieve stress sometimes.”

Once again, not everyone could join the galactic federation. Several months had passed since Galaxian started its services and they had only sponsored a few young guards. In reality and the game, the competitive rates of joining the government was hundreds to one. And the evaluation criterion was combat! She had been secretly investigating so she hadn't taken part in the Beltana war but she also passed the test to enter the federation. And she had

been promoted to the Ensign rank.

“Sword!”

She spoke in a low voice and a long sword came out of her bag. She grabbed the sword and grinned.

A meteor passed by outside the window. At the same time tears fell from Tori's eyes. It had been a few days since he escaped from Stael. The several days were like literally hell to Tori. He still needed to work on Stael. The Katz also needed to sleep so there were several hours where they didn't bother Tori. But now they were flying together for 24 hours on a transport ship so the Katz had plenty of time. The result was Tori's appearance now. Originally Tori was a plump hamster with clean, shiny fur. But now chunks of fur had fallen off and he looked like a chihuahua. Cuts and bruises were also covering multiple places on his skin. This was the result of being the 'play toy' of the cats. There was even more. Tori also had to do the chores like preparing meals and cleaning the ship. He spent all days bending over doing chores and he was also the punching bag for stress alleviation.

‘I'm going to die! No, it is better to die!’

Tori had a lot of regrets. But he still had hope.

‘Yes, it is still too early to give up. The federation will definitely dispatch an investigator to examine this matter. That investigator is the only way I can escape from their hands!’

Tori handed a message to the staff at Kwain's port! Tori had spent his lifetime adventuring. While the Katz were meeting with some people, Tori managed to find a piece of paper and left a message with the staff. It would be noticed in the near future.

‘Help me! I believe you're out there! Please save me!’

The hamster's prayer also continued today. In order to escape from the hands of the devilish cats.....

“I don't know whether to laugh or cry.”

Ark sighed and looked around. A large number of people were erecting hasty buildings. This was the shocking scene that Ark saw from the top of the hill. Ark's destination was Mt. Fargo. There was a small village at the base of the mountain. But there was no information about a sector when he searched Nabe's library. Of course, not all sectors in the Outlands were formally registered. In games users would gravitate to dungeons or hunting grounds. In those places, merchants and user related NPCs would naturally swarm to create a village. That was how an informal sector was created. The problem was the location of the village.

‘Mt. Fargo is the location of the hidden Murat ruins. It can't be a coincidence that a village is created here. Their purpose might be the Murat ruins as well!’

Ark felt his heart drop at the thought. When he thought about it, there was no guarantee that Ark was the only one to obtain clues about the Murat ruins. If they were also after the Murat ruins then all his efforts might be for nothing. However.....

“It is this.”

A bearded, middle aged man lifted a small stone. It was a stone with a strange texture and faint purple circles could be seen on the surface.

“This stone?”

“This isn't a simple stone. It also isn't metal. It is something like a gallstone?”

“Eh? Gallstone? The one that forms in the body?”

“Yes, because it is made from the body of a monster. Of course it isn’t a conventional gallstone. Only one out of thousands of monsters will create this stone. Researchers who investigated determined that high density energy will accumulate in the bodies of monsters that have lived for a long time to create this stone. So they called them gallstones. But that is an unrelated matter to a technician like me. The most important thing to me is the best materials to fuse the stone with.”

“Fusion?”

“Is this the first time you’re hearing about it? Well, it isn’t a common technology yet.”

The middle aged man scratched his beard and said.

“This has worked out great. I just received a request for a fusion operation. Seeing is worth more than a thousand words. Seeing it directly will be faster than explaining it to you.”

The middle aged man smiled and took out two swords from a bag. He placed the swords in the left and right side of an unusual looking machine before placing the stone in the middle. The switch was pressed and sparks flew. Soon one sword and the stone decomposed and small light particles moved along a glass tube. And it was drawn towards the sword on the right side.

“That’s all.”

The man took out the sword. He evaluated it before laughing with satisfaction.

“It came out pretty well. Why don’t you examine it?”

-Camas’ Sword (Magic) +1

Item Type: Long Sword Wearer Restriction: Level 75

Attack: 45~55 Durability: 60/60

Camas' Sword is a common sword made by the Camas company.

In an age where firearms and explosives are common on the frontier, Camas lovingly produces a traditional sword and the top level craftsmanship means it is used by countless pioneers. In the hands of an outstanding warrior, Camas' Sword is worth more than hundreds of other swords.

<Agility +20, Stamina +15>

* The performance has been improved through fusion technology.

Attack: + 10% Durability: +40

* A special effort has been given through the success of the fusion.

Added Special Effect: Shock damage +5

“How is it? Isn't it good?”

The man said with a conceited expression.

“This is fusion technology. This technology fuses two weapons into one and improves the performance. The quality of the stone is more important than the materials. The improved performance will vary depending on the quality of the stone. This time I used swords. However it is also possible to use guns, armour or equipment.”

“That means.....it is possible to receive the stones from the monsters here?”

“To be exact, it is from that cave.”

The man pointed to the mountain in front of him. There were quite a few caves seen among the grey rocks.

“I don't know the reason but the monsters in those caves are highly likely to

drop the stones. Well, it is still only a few hundred but that is dozens of times more than monsters in other areas. Do you now understand why pioneers are flocking here?”

“In order to obtain the stone?”

“Are there any other reasons? This stone is a fairly rare material. The price will be quite considerable. Even if there are plenty of players here, the income is a lot better. Well that isn’t necessarily true these days.”

“It isn’t?”

“It is due to those guys.”

The middle aged man pointed with an irate expression to a large building on the slope of the mountain. It was different from the other hastily built ones and was made with garish metal. It was a military base with the mark of a shield on the side, the symbol of one of the 4 large companies Lauis.

“The large company also come to gather the stones?”

“They say it is to study.”

“Study?”

“Like I said a short while ago, the stone is made by high density energy gathering inside the body of a monster. In other words, it means that high density energy exists in this area. That is their purpose. There is high density energy somewhere in that mountain. Therefore a lode might exist.”

“Is it really because of the lode?”

“Damn, who cares about the lode. Those dogs. Their purpose is the stones. A lot of stones are appearing in one area. They might be using research as an excuse but the only they’re here is to monopolize the stones. They gathered troops here under the name of research. The pioneers are also after the stones. Fortunately I’m able to live thanks to this industry. But I’m barely breaking even. Dammit, are the large companies that great?”

The middle aged man raised his middle finger and cursed at the research centre.

“Anyway, keep this in mind if you’re going to stay here for a while. In fact, the Lauis technicians aren’t that special. The Lauis fees are crazy expensive and their fusion enhancements aren’t that great. Do you understand? If you want fusion technology then come find me. The performance will greatly improve depending on the technician’s skill. Please pay attention to that. Oh, I buy stones as well as sell general items and repairs. So stop by often. You can trust Hammer Industries.”

“I will keep it in mind.”

“Gallstone.....”

The president of Hammer Industries had shown him a Gallstone! It was a type of gemstone used to enhance the performance of an item. There was no need to explain the value of reinforcement in online games. When considering that an item needed to be sacrificed, it might not be worth it. Some people might think being an item of a higher grade would be better. But there were also level restrictions on items. No matter what type of powerful weapon users got their hands on, it was useless if they were too low levelled to use it. However, using a gallstone enabled them to use a similar weapon but at a suitable level for them. Every synthesis would increase damage by 7~12%. Even a normal weapon could become better than a high level weapon if synthesis was repeated. Then it would become a unique item.

And like the weapon that the technician showed, sometimes special options could be added. Any user would covet an item like that! This was a reason a village formed at the base of Mt. Fargo. It was different if Ark was looking for the gallstones like other users. But Ark hadn’t come here for the gallstones. Therefore there were a lot of unnecessarily noisy users wandering

around town.

‘Dammit! Why did the gallstones show up here?’

Ark angrily thought as he looked around.

“Various japtem sold cheaply! These japtem are good materials to be used for fusion!”

“Recruiting a party! We will be recruiting a party for an expedition tomorrow! One spot left!”

There were various users selling items at street stalls or recruiting party members. Probably those users were going into the cave to gather the gallstones.

‘My purpose is the Murat ruins but.....’

Hundreds of users were scattered around. Their purpose was the gallstones. Even if they were looking for the gallstones, it was impossible to look for the Murat ruins with them around. That place was like a treasure warehouse for users. There was also a risk of them discovering the ruins. When considering the number of users already gathered at Mt. Fargo, that possibility was very high. Of course, he hadn’t heard any rumours about ruins being discovered here. But that wasn’t proof that the ruins hadn’t been robbed. If someone found the place then they might hide it so they could monopolize it.

‘.....But it’s still too early to give up.’

Ark took a deep breath and rearranged his heart.

‘There is no way to verify if someone has found the ruins. The only way is to directly search the ruins. The result will be the same. So I don’t need to think about it in advance. I shouldn’t become pessimistic before I even start. Yes, let’s think positively. There is a possibility the ruins haven’t been found yet. Even if they found it, they might not have discovered the relics that I desire.’

There was a reason for that. It was based on the contents of the slab.

‘The slab says that only the descendant of the Murat can reach the ruins. Therefore a special condition was required to reach it. In Charem I needed the Shire to open the meteorite. What? Why do I need to worry about other users? No, it is better not to worry about the result. I need to search through every corner of Mt. Fargo to find the ruins. If I meet any monsters then I also might obtain the gallstones.’

Ark was a positive human.

‘Anyway, now isn’t the time to be thinking about this. I can’t find the Murat ruins or gallstones sitting here. I have to enter the cave first.’

It was good for a human to be diligent. Every minute and second was valuable after identifying the situation. Every second he wasted increased the chances of the ruins being discovered.

“By the way, where did he go?”

Ark muttered in an irate voice and looked around. After entering the village, Milan had separate to look for more information. But 30 minutes had passed and he hadn’t returned to the arranged meeting spot. 5 more minutes passed before Milan returned.

“Hyung-nim!”

“You, what on earth were you doing?”

“I’m sorry. I ran across something puzzling.

“Something puzzling?”

“That is.....that is to say.....”

“Hey! Who do you think I am?”

It happened when Milan was about to open his mouth. A chilly voice spoke from behind and Milan stuttered.

“H-how?”

One man was approaching Milan. He was wearing heavy armour and he glared as he saw Ark.

“Did you think I wouldn’t know? I was suspicious as soon as I saw someone running away but who would’ve expected to meet you in a place like this.”

“.....”

“What happened? Are you shocked speechless? It is natural. You followed Marquis Martin like a puppy to Beltana and you probably thought you would never see me again. But you can’t escape me forever.”

“.....Ah!”

Ark’s eyes that had been staring absentmindedly suddenly widened.

“Yes, you! That’s right! I remembered after hearing about Beltana. Don’t I know you?”

“What? Y-you bastard! You don’t know me?”

“I remember! I mean....well....your name....”

“Valencia!”

“Yes! Valencia!”

Ark clapped and shouted. And Valencia glared at Ark with a bright red face. Ark made a really hateful expression and laughed.

“Your face doesn’t look the same. Did you feel so bad after your demotion that you lost weight? How could I have recognized you?”

In fact, Ark was inwardly quite puzzled. Ark never imagined that he would meet Valencia in a place like this. No, in fact Ark had forgotten about Valencia until now. Ark would forget about someone once he repaid his grudge. And he quickly remembered after seeing Valencia again.

–Valencia was the leader of the 1st armoured platoon on Beltana.

–I unknowingly aggravated someone with a high rank. But I paid him back with interest.

–I don't need to worry about that guy now.

Those memories.....

It wasn't nice of him but he used their hostile relationship to make Valencia explode with anger. Ark looked like a cool character next to Valencia.

‘Damn, I have no capital. Why did I have to meet that guy now?’

He might've lost his position once the bribes from prisoners were discovered but Valencia was once the leader of the 1st armoured platoon which meant he was a great user. Ark defeated him on Beltana by using a nuclear explosion, not directly fighting him. He got that position for a reason. He hated to admit it but Valencia's equipment, level and skills meant he was a lot stronger than Ark. But that was the him on Beltana. It had already been a month since the war on Beltana ended. Ark's level, equipment and skills weren't the same as before. Now he wouldn't be pushed that easily.

‘The problem is what happens next.’

Ark needed to be here until he found the Murat ruins. In such a situation he would be tired whether he won or lost against Valencia.

‘It can't be helped. It has to be this!’

Ark worried for a while before turning his body.

“You should be happy meeting me after a long time. How you been well in the meantime? Well, I would like to discuss our memories but I'm slightly busy right now. Let's mend our fences.”

“If you walk away then I'll shoot a hole in the back of your head.”

.....It didn't work.

Ark sighed and slowly turned his body again.

“So, what now?”

“You still don’t understand? Shouldn’t we settle this between you and me?”

Valencia grabbed a rod attached to his waist. And a red light vertically rose up from it. It was the beam sword that often appeared in SF movies. It was an expensive weapon.

“What? A fight?”

“Ohh, is that a beam sword? Isn’t this worth watching?”

People flocked around once Valencia took out the beam sword. It was a village in the Outlands. It wasn’t even formally registered as a sector. There weren’t any guards. This place was no different from a lawless area.

‘Do I have no choice?’

Now the battle was inevitable. If he couldn’t avoid it then he didn’t want to show a weak side.

“Won’t you regret this?”

Ark answered coolly.

“That’s enough Hyung-nim!”

Milan who had been watching with uneasy eyes suddenly cried out.

“Don’t you know? Valencia was the leader of the armoured platoon! He isn’t an opponent that Hyung-nim can win against! Cut it out! You’ll die! I can’t watch Hyung-nim be beaten to a pulp!”

Milan had lost his will before the battle even started. He lowered his head to Valencia and said in a tearful tone.

“Captain Valencia-nim, I’m very sorry! I don’t know what happened between the two of you but I apologize on Hyung-nim’s behalf! Please forget this just once! Please!”

It was embarrassing just seeing it. But he could understand Milan’s

attitude. Milan had been pardoned and left Beltana before Ark formed the Royal Guards. Therefore he didn't know about the hostile relationship between Ark and Valencia. Milan only knew Valencia as the captain of the armoured platoon. Milan thought of Valencia as someone a mere prisoner couldn't defeat. Milan had travelled together with Ark through the Outlands so he knew Ark was strong. He also knew that Ark was Beltana's Hero. Yet he didn't think that a prisoner like Ark could deal with Valencia. Milan had been on Beltana for longer than Ark so he was intimidated by the opponent called Valencia.

"Hyung-nim, Hyung-nim will apologize as well! Yes?"

"This bastard! What are you talking about? That isn't the case at all. Besides....."

Ark pulled Milan's collar and looked at Valencia.

"That guy won't leave even if I apologize."

"You understand."

"Like I said, you will regret it."

"Impertinent fellow!"

Valencia stepped forward with his beam sword. Ark also pulled out the Impact Sword and took one defiant step towards him. They both stepped forward until the gap narrowed.

"Sir Valencia!"

A loud voice cried out from behind. Valencia flinched and turned around with a frightened look. At that time, someone in a robe walked out from the crowd of bystanders. The face couldn't be seen because of the hood but a blue light was shining inside. The man in the robe reached Valencia and murmured in a low voice.

"I told you to refrain from personal behaviour."

“But.....”

“The command is absolute.”

The robed man declared sharply. The surprising thing was Valencia’s reaction. He was still staring at Ark but he turned off the beam sword and placed it back on his waist.

‘Who is this guy? He looks like an NPC but why would Valencia obey like a puppy when the NPC speaks? What is their relationship?’

Then the robed man turned towards Ark.

“I’m sorry. Valencia is a member of my party. I don’t know what problems are between the two of you but can you leave it like this?”

“He is the one who started it first.....”

Ark answered the robed man with a doubting expression. Milan quickly ran forward and lowered his head.

“Thank you! Thank you very much!”

Really, this brat.....

“Then let’s put this in order. He won’t cause you trouble again.”

The robed man nodded and turned. Valencia stared at Ark but followed after the robed man.

‘I’m feeling somewhat uncomfortable.....’

Ark looked at their retreating backs and frowned.

‘That robed man is suspicious but Valencia following him obediently is even more suspicious. Is he possibly participating in a quest with the robed man? No matter what, Valencia isn’t the type to retreat with a few words.’

There was something there. He had such an idea. Besides, the robed man said he wouldn’t cause trouble in the future but Ark didn’t believe that. Ark couldn’t believe the words of the robed man. And this was Valencia. Who

knows when he would try to stab Ark in the back with the beam sword?

‘Despite that, why did we have to meet again?’

He had an ominous feeling that the path to finding the Murat ruins wouldn’t be smooth. But right now he had different worries.

“Sheesh, what the? Is that the end?”

“We were looking forward to a fight! What a waste of time.”

“That guy kept on cringing. If a battle started then the result will be clear.”

“Didn’t that guy just show his belly? I turned red just watching him.”

.....He was embarrassed.

“How thoughtless.”

The robed man muttered in a low voice. Valencia sighed and nodded.

“I’m sorry. That guy just makes me so angry.....”

“Is it a grudge?”

“Yes, there were some incidents before.”

“That’s great.”

The man stopped moving. An eerie smile was revealed as the man pulled down his hood.

“All those blinded by greed who gathered here will die soon.”

Mystery of the Stone Mountain

“Hyung-nim, think!”

“Pant pant pant, understood. Stop scolding me so much.”

“Ah, why are you annoyed?”

“Damn, why wouldn’t I be?”

“I’m just playing around. You didn’t know something like that?”

“Who? I knew it!”

A rough voice suddenly said. And Milan withdrew with surprise.

“Wah! What a surprise. Phew, your face really doesn’t make any sense.”

“Hey, what? What did you say? Do you think I’m doing this because I want to?”

Ark snapped angrily and scowled at Milan. Ark’s face was completely different from a while ago. He had slit eyes, puffy cheeks and buckteeth! Naturally this wasn’t Ark’s original face. Once again, Ark was a celebrity. He appeared a few times on broadcast and he looked the same in New World so there were a lot of people who knew his face. When he created a character in Galaxian, he played around like a three year old using play dough. Ark’s face looked different because of the Hyde Helmet! The Hyde Helmet was a special helmet that could change the name and face that other players saw. Milan was looking at the ugly face that he created the first time he called himself Alan in Charem. In fact, Ark hadn’t been thinking about creating an ugly face. This was a face he made in a hurry. However once a name was registered to a face, it wasn’t possible to change it.

‘I don’t care what other people see when they look at me.....’

The reason Ark was using the Hyde Helmet was due to the previous incident.

He had encountered Valencia out of the blue and suddenly entered a battle. He was slightly embarrassed by Milan's reaction but this situation meant Ark couldn't pay a lot of attention to it. Wearing this meant that it was possible for Ark to avoid any fights. Yet his appearance made even Milan look slightly handsomer.

'I was worried for Hyung-nim and now his appearance is like this.'

But that idea didn't continue for long.

"Hey, there's that guy?"

"That's right. He's still hanging around?"

"Even if he didn't want to be killed, isn't it too much begging for his life? It would've been better to just die. If he is so afraid to die then why did he come into the Outlands?"

"Leave it. There might be some circumstances."

He called his place a village but it was actually just a place where users and NPCs gathered. The stores of the NPCs lined up only reached several hundred metres. Rumours would spread through this place in an instant. And the original rumour wasn't preserved but became ever more exaggerated. Now the rumour was that Ark grabbed the hem of Valencia's pants and begged for his life while crying. He wasn't a person that could endure this. That's why Ark used the Hyde Helmet. He was embarrassed!

"But why did you act like that?"

"I was just worried about Hyung-nim....."

"Yes!"

Ark stabbed Milan's chest with his fingers.

"Did you think I would be stepped on? I don't like that thought."

"But the opponent is Valencia of Beltana's armoured platoon."

“I told you. He is just a child.”

“But he isn’t weak.”

“Aha, you’re saying that I’m still weaker than someone from the federation even though I’m Beltana’s Hero?”

“No, I know that Hyung-nim has become stronger.....”

“But I’ll be stepped on by Valencia?”

“That’s not what I mean. Why do you have to twist my words?”

“Sorry. Because I don’t like being called weak.”

Ark retorted in a testy tone. However Ark was petulant for another reason. If he thought about it from Milan’s viewpoint, Ark naturally wasn’t someone who could beat Valencia. Ark also wasn’t sure about the prospect of success. And Ark wasn’t a character who would dwell on other people’s words. Of course it wasn’t a comfortable feeling but if he paid attention to everything said about him then how could he live in this inhospitable world? Besides, he had used the Hyde Helmet just now. If he walked with Milan then he would be recognizable even if he hid his face.....he hadn’t hid his original face to hide from the unpleasant looks. Ark’s petulance started to rise after he arrived at Mt. Fargo.

A few hours ago.

“This is larger than I thought now that I’m standing underneath it.”

Ark muttered as he looked up at Mt. Fargo. It wasn’t pleasant encountering Valencia but Ark had come here to find the Murat ruins. However he felt a stifling atmosphere now that he was actually looking up at the big mountain. That only thing Ark knew was that the Murat ruins were somewhere in Mt. Fargo.

“If it hasn’t been found yet then the probability that it is hidden somewhere in a cave is high.....”

His mind was in a hurry but he knew that limiting the search scope was dangerous. He couldn’t limit the search range in case he missed it so he had to check everywhere precisely. In other words, entering the cave before he searched outside the mountains might make him miss it.

“I also have the same idea.”

Milan nodded his head.

“I don’t see any suspicious areas just looking at it. But if it at a visible place on the mountain or inside the cave then it would already be found by other users. In other words, it is in a place not exposed to the outside. That means it is highly likely that it is buried somewhere.”

Fargo was a large mountain. It was well over 200 metres in height? However, the mountain was a mountain. It didn’t matter if he could find it by looking around but it was a serious problem if buried. They couldn’t just dig blindly. That was when Milan’s ability as a treasure hunter came in handy.

“Huhuhu, it is my turn.”

Milan smiled and took out an iron rod in the shape of an ‘L.’ This was the secret weapon of the treasure hunter Milan, dowsing!

-Dowsing (Special)

Item Type: For Searching (Related skill is necessary)

Sometimes a treasure hunter would face a situation where treasure is buried in an unknown location. Of course, such problems can be solved with advanced equipment but it isn’t always possible to carry that equipment around. However the ground can’t just be blinding dug at. Then something like dowsing rods will be needed.

The dowsing rod is the most affordable and easy to use exploratory device. If you grasp two iron rods in both hands and walk then it is okay. The iron rods will move and cross over when they find something. However, there is no scientific basis behind it.

* Accuracy will depend on the user's skill proficiency.

It was a technique that sometimes appeared on TV.

‘But to use dowsing in the 24th century.....’

There was no scientific evidence but it was better than blindly digging at the ground. When looking at it like that, Ark and Milan could be called a golden combination.

“I’m picking up something here!”

Milan’s dowsing rods had discovered something.

“Okay, get out of the way! Dadadadada!”

Ark grabbed his shovel and ran to the target spot. Mt. Fargo consisted mainly of rocks so digging wasn’t a problem for Ark whose skill had reached intermediate level. Small stones or large stones were split instantly. It was highly likely that something would emerge.

-Old Metal Utensils

Item Type: Antique

Metal utensils made from outdated technology. It is believed that Istana’s indigenous people used it long before humans came here. However more antiques are useless except for their looks.

Well, that is for most of them.....

‘The accuracy of dowsing is quite high. This will greatly reduce the search

time!’

That wasn’t all. It was only trash but he had unearthed items that the indigenous people of Istana used. The odds that the Murat ruins were hidden somewhere became increasingly higher. His motivation also increased!

“Over here!”

“Get out of the way!”

Pa pa pa pa!

“There’s something here!”

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

“Here! Here! Here! Here too!”

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

So he ran around the mountain for several hours.

‘Pant pant pant, this is strange. This is strange no matter how I think about it!’

Ark and Milan panted. They had run around the mountain for several hours digging pits. It was serious. Sweat dripped down his face into his armour. However Milan’s skin was dry compared to Ark.

“Hyung-nim, isn’t the weather quite cold?”

He was talking nonsense. It was natural. Ark had been shovelling alone for a couple of hours. In the meantime Milan had just been running around with his dowsing rods. At first he didn’t realize it because he was so focused on the Murat but Milan wasn’t shedding even one drop of sweat.

“Hey you! Why aren’t you digging?”

“I’ve never done it.”

“Aren’t you a treasure hunter? How did you find anything in the meantime?”

“Of course I used the auto excavator. But I was caught sneaking on the territory of a noble and all my equipment except for the 3D restoration machine was confiscated before I was sent to Beltana. Ah, I still have these dowsing rods as well.”

Milan answered as he walked around with the dowsing rods. The dowsing rods that moved in Milan’s hands....

“If you don’t know then learn! You don’t have an auto excavator now so start learning how to dig!”

“Understood.”

Ark was his Hyung-nim so Milan took the shovel handed to him without any complaints. And that made Ark even angrier. That time when Ark was going pa pa pa pa! It was a cool sound when listening to it. However, Milan’s shovel went tick tick tick.....

He didn’t drive in the shovel properly. Once again, Ark had dug a tunnel from Tori’s junkyard to the federal machine as well as the frozen ground on Beltana so his Dig skill had reached intermediate level. But Milan hadn’t formed the skill yet! Mt. Fargo was covered in rocks so the difficulty was too high for a beginner. It wasn’t good enough. The exploration had begun but there was no security that other users wouldn’t find the ruins. And hundreds of users were exploring Mt. Fargo and there was no guarantee he could find it. He needed to dig in order to find the ruins! It wasn’t the time to be playing around.

‘Dammit, I’m really suffering!’

“Just give it to me!”

In the end Ark couldn’t stand it anymore and took back the shovel. And once again dig! Dig! Dig!

‘Damn, wherever I go I can’t escape from digging.’

- 'Dig' has gained 1 experience.

- 'Dig' has gained 1 experience.....

The messages that appeared once in a while were the only consolation.

“Hyung-nim, there is a response here!”

“I know!”

Ark cursed and wielded the shovel.

“Eh? What’s this?”

“Why are there holes all over the mountain?”

“There weren’t any yesterday. What the hell happened?”

The users looked at Mt. Fargo and muttered noisily. The appearance of Mt. Fargo had changed in one day. Originally Mt. Fargo had several caves running through it. But that had increased to over 100 in just one day. Of course, the number of caves hadn’t increased. The new pits were only 1~2 metres at most. The new holes looked different. This phenomenon was so mysterious that it stimulated the users’ curiosity.

“UFO! A UFO must’ve made the holes!”

“Don’t be silly. Why would there be UFO’s in the space pioneering age?”

“It’s probably caused by the foundation sinking down. There aren’t a lot of mountains in this cave. Please players use their guns and explosives on monsters in the cave so it is naturally for sinkholes to happen.”

“Doesn’t that mean the caves might also collapse?”

“That’s not it.”

Just as the users were thinking anxiously. One person stepped forward and said.

“It is because of a person. I saw it yesterday. Someone was carrying a shovel and digging at the land.”

“What? Then that person dug all the holes? Why?”

“Isn’t it clear? He thinks the gallstones are buried in the ground and is going around randomly digging.”

“That is ridiculous.”

“Yes, who would dig blindly even if items could be found? Besides, how can anyone create 100 holes in a day?”

“Isn’t that person really stupid?”

The users kept on buzzing noisily.

‘That stupid fellow is here!’

One user was angrily glaring at the back of their head. He was the one who dug holes in Mt. Fargo, Ark.

‘I have to find the ruins before others do!’

This obsession was how he managed to dig 100 holes in one day. In fact, Ark hadn’t expected a lot. The ruins were very likely hidden somewhere in the cave. However, he couldn’t conclusively state that. The caves were also the aim of the users looking for gallstones. If the ruins hadn’t been found yet then he couldn’t ignore the possibility that it was hidden somewhere outside.

Looking outside took less time than searching the complicated caves where monsters swarmed. Therefore he started his search outside first. But the result was a total failure. He spent one day digging and hadn’t found anything. Although that didn’t mean he got nothing.

-The rating of the skill 'Dig (Common Occupation ☆) has increased!

Dig (Master, Active): you have become a master at techniques using the shovel. You have mastered that tricks that will allow you to easily dig through solid, frozen ground or stone gravel. The callouses on your palm also proves what a wonderful worker you are.

<Digging speed increased by 100% and the chances of finding items and minerals also increased by 50%>

His intermediate dig skill had increased to an advanced level.

'For Dig to be the first skill that reaches an advanced level.....'

In fact, it was a natural thing. The stars attached to the skill weren't just the degree of difficulty to acquire it. More stars meant it was harder to raise the proficiency. Dig was only one star so it had no choice but to go up quickly. Anyway, his speed at digging the land increased to 100%! That was the reason why Ark was able to fill the mountain with holes in just one day. That wasn't all.

Of course, it wasn't easy for Ark no matter how fast his digging increased. He dug everywhere that Milan indicated with the dowsing. He dug 100 holes and found 100 items. Of course, 90% of them were japtem but.....

-Carmela's Sword (Magic)

Item Type: Long Sword Wearer Restriction: Level 60

Attack: 35~45 Durability: 34/60

An ancient sword unearthed in Mt. Fargo.

Many ancient alien species have disappeared from the galaxy. Therefore excavating uncovers many weapons that the ancient warriors used. Sometimes they will be made with technology that is difficult for modern

science to reproduce. This sword is made with excellent craftsmanship. Despite thousands of years passing since the weapon was created, it has a better performance than many present day weapons. It is still unknown how these ancient civilizations could produce such weapons.

<Strength +10, Stamina +5>

It was a magic grade level 60 sword!

‘It isn’t just japtem.’

He dug 100 holes so sometimes items like these would appear. But when compared to the magic grade long swords sold at the stores, the attack was a little low. If it was sold at an auction then h would probably only receive a price slightly better than a general long sword. But it was a weapon that Ark was eagerly waiting for. While Ark used the shotgun Fire Eagle, his secondary weapon to assist him was the level 10 dagger. In that situation he was extremely grateful for the level 60 magic sword! Even if 90% of the items found were japtem, it added up to at least 10 gold.

“Dowsing.....it is a surprisingly useful skill.....”

Ark looked at the snoring Milan near him. The Carmela’s Sword and other items he found were the result of digging all night. However, it wouldn’t be possible to find items if he just dug excessively at the land. Although 90% of it was crap, Milan’s dowsing skill meant he always found an item.

‘Dowsing can detect items buried it the ground and I can dig it up. This is similar to a skill combo. I’ll have to learn it once I finish this.’

But nothing in this world was free.

‘Damn, there isn’t anywhere on my body that hurts.’

The price he paid for the loot he found in one day was severe.

-You have 'muscular pain.'

This pain is caused by excessive muscular use.

<Strength, Agility and Stamina will decrease by 50% for 8 hours>

This happened despite his Dig skill. He hadn't received this penalty while digging the underground tunnel because of breaks. Although he dug up frozen ground on Beltana, that was only during the scheduled times. However, his heart felt urgent and he dug for one full day without any rests. Milan was fine wandering around with iron rods while Ark received muscular pain from shovelling. Anyway!

'I've already gone around the outside. Now there are only the caves left!'

This was the reason Ark came down to the village. According to the information he obtained, the lowest ranked monster in the Mt. Fargo caves was level 100. If he entered deeper than they would be more than level 150! Some even reached level 200. The service just started so the average level of most users were 60~70. Therefore a hunting party was required!

'If a level 100 monster appears and I only have Milan.....'

Right now he had muscular pain and his stats were reduced by 50%. Despite finishing searching outside and napping, he still had 1 hour left.

'Besides, my purpose is to find the ruins not hunting. I can't spend a lot of time defeating the monster. There is also no guarantee that only one monster will appear at once or that a level 150 monster won't emerge. I have no choice but to find a party.'

Although his heart was reluctance, Ark confirmed the problems and knew he had no choice. However a party wasn't that easy to obtain.

-Looking for a position. Level 80, the name is Alan, 1 NPC.

30 minutes had passed since the message was set up and there had been no hits yet. Therefore his annoyance started increasing.

“Excuse me.”

A man wearing light armour approached. He sent a sharp glance towards the dozing Milan and asked quickly.

“Are you bringing the NPC along with you when hunting?”

“Yes, if it’s possible.....”

“Then it will be hard to find a party. That’s because everybody is looking for the gallstones. So a party is created the minimum number required. More people in a party means the profit is lower. And the combat power of a NPC is also lower than that of a user. He doesn’t look like a combat NPC so it will be difficult to find at party with him.”

‘What? It is because of this guy?’

He had thought it was strange. Once again, the average level in Galaxian was 60~70. Ark was 10 levels higher. Nevertheless, the level 65 users were popular while Ark who was higher levelled was waiting for 30 minutes. It was all due to Milan. They didn’t want to give stones away to NPCs who weren’t useful in battle! That’s why Ark didn’t receive any offers.

“I never thought of that. In fact, he is just my bag carrier so you don’t need to split the loot with the NPC. You don’t need to put him in the party.”

“I knew it was like that.”

The man laughed and nodded his head.

“In fact, we were a party of 5 but 2 people just left. But to tell you the truth, my friend and I are over level 80 so 2 more people aren’t required. If we supplement it with someone else of the same level then we can hunt the monsters with just 1 more person. If the NPC doesn’t receive a share of the loot then you can come with us. Can you do 3~4 hours?”

“Yes, I can do all night!”

“I’m Leon.”

“Alan.”

Ark stood up and replied. He woke Milan up and followed after Leon.

“What do you think?”

Valencia asked as he looked at the 100 holes dug in Mt. Fargo.

“It might be people digging randomly at the ground looking for items but.....”

“You don’t think it is that simple.”

The robed man nodded and replied.

“There might be someone else aside from us who knows the secret of the mountain. That is the only reason I can think of for digging that many holes in one day.”

“Will this be a setback to the plan?”

“I wouldn’t think so.....”

The robed man stared at the tattered looking Mt. Fargo for a while before saying in a low voice.

“Nevertheless we should advance the plan.”

“Over there.”

Leon’s party was gathered at a cave halfway up the mountain. There was 1 man and 1 woman. The man was a warrior with a sword, gun and armour like

Leon while the woman was dressed in a white garment like a healer

“The warrior is called Slayer while the healer is Melina.”

Leon introduced the two of them to Ark. The warrior called Slayer sent Leon an uncomfortable look.

“What? Didn’t we decide on 1 person?”

“There is 1 person and a NPC. We don’t need to separate the loot for the NPC.”

“Well then I don’t care.....”

Slayer scratched his head before looking at Melina. He rushed to Leon and hurried whispered.

-Hey! Why did you bring a guy?

-This guy? What are you saying all of a sudden?

-Damn, that’s right. You weren’t there. Do you remember what I was talking about yesterday? That guy was so pathetic he held onto the legs and begged for his life. That person is this guy.

-Eh? Really?

-Yes, there is no doubt. His face seems a bit different but I remember the NPC. These guys won’t be useful at all.

-But he is level 80.

-What does that matter? Most users in the village are level 60~70. What warrior could reach level 80 by being afraid of strange things? He might be wearing those clothes but he probably isn’t a warrior. No, he definitely isn’t a warrior. He’s bringing along a NPC so he is probably a merchant or porter. Let’s check his body coating.

“Alan-nim, what body coating do you have?”

Leon asked Ark after listening to Slayer.

“Survivor.”

–See! Survivor, it is the feeling that he will do whatever it takes to survive! If it becomes even slightly dangerous then he’ll probably abandon his colleagues to run away!

–Then what do we do?

–What else? We have to send him back.

–But he said we don’t need to worry about giving loot to the NPC.....

Leon scratched his head and hesitated.

–And it will be difficult to find another ugly user.

–Indeed. That’s certainly the case. It was to the extent that I released a sound when I first saw him.

Slayer gawked at Ark. In fact, these users had another purpose apart from the gallstones. It was understandable when looking at the level, but Leon and Slayer were people who spent more than 12 hours in the game a day. And the thing they desired most was a girlfriend. And spring visited all of a sudden. Melina!

Leon and Slayer made an effort to impress girls. However the only things that emerged from their mouths were related to the game so it never worked out. But Melina was different. Her character was refreshing and she liked talking about the game unlike other women. Plus her appearance was pretty!

‘It’s a match! This is a chance that heaven has given me!’

Since then Slayer and Leon’s goal changed from the gallstones to Melina. And they made some preparations to look better compared to other men. Therefore Leon and Slayer looked for appearance when forming a party. They picked the ugly ones so that they could stand out more. In fact, the two who just left the party were only level 57 and 59. They were accepted into the party because they were ugly. It was also why Leon showed interest in Ark

despite being attached to a NPC. His slit eyes and protruding buck teeth stimulated an unpleasant feeling! Ark's face shown in the Hyde Helmet was +1000% to Leon and Slayer. In this game, the character's faces could be touched up. Therefore it was rare to find an ugly user in the game. Even so, Ark's degree of ugliness was extremely rare!

–This low talent is too valuable to give up.

–That's right.

–It isn't a problem if he can't fight. The two of us alone can catch any level 100 monster. It is actually better that this guy doesn't help in battle. We will look even better compared to him.

–Yes.

–Anyway, I take back what I said about sending him away. This is a smart move. If we bring that guy here and send him back with no explanation then it might look bad to Melina.

–Chet, I see. I'll allow that guy. And don't forget the promise. Fair play. We can't cause trouble for Melina by fighting among ourselves. Understood?

–Of course! It is a man's promise!

Leon and Slayer shook each other's hands firmly. Then Ark who was watching from behind asked with anxiety.

“Is there a problem?”

“No, no! No problem!”

“Yes, we're done with the preparations so we can enter immediately.”

“Enter? But I.....”

Ark scratched his head. He had followed the party for the moment but he still had 1 hour of muscle pain left. The penalty was the penalty but he was in so much pain that it was difficult for him to even move. Therefore he wanted to

ask if he could be rear support until the muscle pain wore off. However Leon and Slayer slapped his back before he could say anything.

“It’s okay. You just have to believe in us and follow.”

“Yes, Alan-nim doesn’t need to worry about anything.”

“Melina-nim, let’s go.”

Leon and Slayer placed their arms over Ark’s shoulder and moved towards Melina. Ark’s face was +1000% a blessing for the two men. Leon and Slayer who were ordinary looked handsome next to him. No, they looked like users standing next to a monster.

–As expected, our appearance looks a lot better.

–Huhuhu, if he’s here then we’re like celebrities!

Leon and Slayer looked at Ark with warm eyes. The two men dreaming of a pink romance entered the cave. The fear they would face inside the cave.....

Cave of Terror

‘This is.....’

Ark looked at the people walking ahead of him with uncomfortable eyes. They were Leon, Slayer, Melina and Milan. It was the first time he had joined a part of people since R-14. Once in a party, it was important to consider balance, power, linked actions etc. All this could be checked once entering the dungeon.

Kukung!

It happened not long after they entered. There was a sudden ringing sound in the darkness. It was the skin of a large lizard monster scraping against stone. The lizard called Thanatos was a pitiful monster killed instantly by users for its gallstone. Slayer looked greedy as soon as the Thanatos appeared.

“Thanatos! Leon, attract its attention!”

Tu tu tu tung-!

Blue rays of light exploded from Leon. The Thanatos shrieked as the special rays penetrated his shell and rushed towards the party. But it was obstructed by Slayer’s shield before it could attack the party.

“Your opponent is me! Vibrate, shield! Taunt!”

The surface of the huge shield started vibrating like the surface of a speaker. It was the warrior’s Taunt! The Thanatos attacked Slayer like it was in agony. However most of the attacks were blocked with Slayer’s shield and he counterattacked with his mace. Of course Leon and Melina weren’t just standing there.

Tu tu tu tung-!

The rays from Leon’s rail gun were fired again and again. The rail gun

accelerated the bullets using electromagnetic power so it had the best destructive power and penetration power. It also damaged biological or mechanical creatures so it was one of the firearms that users like best. Although the heavy armour and shield had a disadvantage in slowing down movement speed, it was the best for characters known as tanks to withstand attacks.

“Power surge! Power the Berserker’s courage!”

Melina also used buffs to increase the attack of the party!

‘A battlefield and hunting ground is definitely different.’

Ark had quite a bit of experience fighting in a party. He had fought with the Royal Guards on Beltana while in Charem he fought alongside 30 Phoenix members against the Sufferers. But this party had a different feeling. There were always fewer numbers in parties so the competency of the individual meant a lot more. Victory or defeat depended on the individual’s abilities rather than tactics. The more the number was reduced, the more weight was placed on the individual. And the military troops also had support from tanks or armoured vehicles as well as large weapons. However the users in a party were required to buy the supplies themselves. That’s why it was difficult for players to become medics. Medics who handled various drugs and medical supplies were without doubt the strongest healers! But the supplies for a medic weren’t free. Preparing their own medicines was more expensive than just buying the recovery ampoules. They had to spend money on medicines and buffing medicines if they wanted to fight!

It wasn’t something that users’ with poor pockets could afford to pick. If a user was a healer then they usually picked the Esper type that focused on recovery. It had less recovery capabilities but it relied on mana so it was free. Anyway, the basics of a party in Galaxian were a combination of tank-damage dealer- healer. Therefore conjunction moves were important and relied on the individual’s competence. When judging just this aspect, the part

scored 8~9 out of 10.

“Body resonance! Regeneration!”

“Melina-nim, thank you! Hahaha, bring it on lizard!”

Melina aimed her healing at Slayer and he pushed back the Thanatos.

“Slayer, expose that guy’s head! Precision Shot!”

Leon aimed his rail gun through a gap. Slayer, Leon and Melina fulfilled the tank-damage dealer-healer combo and the level 100 Thanatos wasn’t a match against them.

.....That was the problem.

‘I shouldn’t be just watching!’

Ark still had muscle pain. The battle was also so one-sided that it didn’t matter if he didn’t enter the fight. It was the first battle in this party so he wanted to join but the muscles in his entire body felt like they were breaking from the pain. He also had his combat related stats decreased by half. And every time he moved it felt like his body was tingling.

“Ah! What are you doing?”

“Just stay in the back!”

Slayer and Leon complained immediately. After the battle was over, Slayer looked at Ark and bluntly asked.

“Are you really level 80?”

“I’m sorry. I tried to tell you before we came in but I have muscle pain right now and all my stats are reduced by 50%.”

“Uh? Indeed.”

Slayer nodded.....

-Hey, he said he had muscle pain. Have you heard of it?

–I’ve never heard of something like that. He is clearly making up a reason because he is embarrassed.

A user had never shovelled for 24 hours in the game before. It was natural that they would never hear about muscle pain and then think Ark was lying. But Slayer and Leon didn’t show it in their expressions.

–He really is a lousy bastard. Should he really remain in the party?

–That guy acted shamefully in the village. It isn’t an abrupt thing.

–Then it’s okay.

–Yes, since we’re looking for ugly guys.

–That’s right. It is a rare opportunity. Don’t pay attention to the loot and just hunt.

Ark sensed that Leon and Slayer were whispering to each other. Of course he couldn’t imagine the contents of their words.

–Is it impossible? If I enter the battle despite having muscle pain.....’

Ark thought they were discussing about how to treat him and sighed before speaking.

“This muscle pain will last for another 40 minutes. I thought it would take more time to find a party after putting up the ad.....I had no intention of deliberately hiding this but if you’re annoyed then I will leave the party.”

“Ah, no it’s fine!”

Slayer and Leon shook their heads.

“Don’t misunderstand. We spoke without thinking after the battle. We have no complaints. Isn’t that right Leon?”

“Of course. We value our bonds above anything else. Once you join then we should finish it to the end! That’s our motto. We accepted Ark-nim into the party so we’ll shoulder the responsibility until the end. If we don’t do this

then we won't be able to sleep. We'll be responsible!"

Leon said with looking at Melina.

"It isn't necessary for you to worry. You don't need to join in on the fights. Just stay behind and give support fire while protecting Melina."

"Yes, because Melina-nim is invaluable."

This time Slayer was the one who spoke while looking at Melina.

'Ah! Some users are really considerate!'

Ark wasn't naive. Ark noticed the atmosphere after hearing Leon and Slayer's words. These guys were playing the game. Then a woman entered the party and they were pretending to be good. When considering those guys' purpose, he really thought it was pitiful.....

'It's fine if I can support from behind.'

In fact, that had been the part he was most worried about. Unlike other users, Ark's purpose was to find the Murat ruins. But if Ark and Milan participated in the battle then there would be no time to search. Furthermore, this was a dungeon so there were plenty of parties hunting. Therefore it would inevitably take a longer time to look around. However he couldn't confess about the ruins.

'I have to get Milan out of combat!'

This was the reason Ark was happy to give up Milan's share of the loot. He was going to use a suitable excuse to leave Milan in the back so that he could search for the ruins. Now both of them were remaining in the rear so it was good. Judging by the atmosphere of the party, he didn't need to worry about the loot even if he didn't participate in the battle. There were no conditions better for Ark.

'Then.....'

"Thank you. In fact I've been worrying about being weak compared to my

level but I'm touched by your compassion. It is shameless but please allow me to continue in the party. What about Melina-nim?"

"It also isn't good if people keep on changing."

Melina replied cutely. This was the answer that Slayer and Leon wanted to receive. Not surprisingly, the two men were happy to grab Ark's hands after hearing Melina's words.

"I agree! We will continue with these 5 people until the end!"

"Don't worry about it! We will push you on!"

Thus Ark's dungeon exploration begun. Slayer and Leon took care of the Thanatos every time it appeared. Ark and Milan just had to appear like they were shooting while looking around. And they still received experience and loot when the battle ended.

'I have the perfect party right now.....'

There were only two parts that he was dissatisfied about.

"You bastard! You're stronger than you look. But I'm the shield for my colleagues! I won't allow you to take one step even if my entire body is shredded! Bring it on! Ack!"

"Ah! Slayer! Ack! You bastard, he is my friend! Wrathful Bullets!"

"Hut! T-these lights are....ohh! Every cell in my body is alive! Thank you Melina-nim! I will use this opportunity! I will be Melina-nim's shield!"

"I will be Melina-nim's bullets! Take this! Continuous Bullets!"

This was the first thing. The over compensatory actions and words every time they competed in a battle! He didn't know if Melina was slow or pretending not to know but Ark could clearly see the two men's hearts. But it was thanks to this that Ark could do nothing so he endured it. The second problem was Milan.

“Phew, he is quite useful.”

“I didn’t expect much from the support shooting but there were a lot of critical hits.”

Slayer and Leon were talking about Milan. It was unnecessary to say but Ark’s power showed its strength in close combat. But it wasn’t possible to use the shotgun meant for close distances as rear support. Therefore Ark was forced to use the level 20 pistol Fading Steel. The attack power was trivial. Ark’s marksmanship skills were also bad.

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

Ark’s shots kept on missing. However Milan was using a machine gun. Furthermore, he was a treasure hunter that used long distance attacks so the NPC was better at rear support than Ark. Ark only dealt 2~3 percent damage while Milan dealt 10%! The problem wasn’t with Ark.

“Who on earth.....”

It was the words he heard. The problem was Milan’s attitude.

“Hey, that won’t do at all. Although he is still my Hyung-nim.”

‘What? What did he say just then? That bastard!’

Milan’s eyes had been shining with respect for Ark when they arrived at Mt. Fargo. Then he met Valencia and was humiliated by Milan and the atmosphere slowly changed while they were digging at Mt. Fargo. And to receive more praise than Ark.....

“Hyung-nim, please don’t pay any attention to it. Aren’t you my Hyung-nim? Hat hat hat!”

He started speaking informally to Ark. It was an inevitable result. The relationship between the NPC and user depending on their intimacy. And the NPC’s appreciation often changed depending on the evaluation of the surrounding users. The Royal Guards’ loyalty went up when Ark became

Beltana's hero while Milan's decreased due to Leon and Slayer ignoring him. Ark once again realized an important fact.

'I shouldn't be blindly nice to the NPCs. Sometimes they will forget who their master is. Damn, you'll see soon. I'll show you once the ruins are found!'

But the main thing right now was finding the Murat ruins. Ark pushed his anger down and endured it. So the users and NPC continued to treat him badly while he continued the exploration. Ark then faced a difficulty he hadn't considered.

'Eh? This place is.....?'

Ark looked around puzzled before going up to Melina.

"Melina-nim, perhaps this place.....didn't we pass this place a short time ago?"

"Huh? You didn't know so far?"

"Don't know?"

"We've been going around the same place for a while now. There are 9 entrances in Mt. Fargo but they're all connected. Only the layers are different. There are 3 layers. We're only going around the top. The passages here aren't wide and are connected in a circle."

"Do we have to go to the other caves to go to the lower floors of the dungeon?"

"That isn't the case. Alan-nim, do you see that hole in the ground? That hole is connected to a lower floor of the dungeon. You can just jump down that hole."

"Then why are we still going around the same place?"

"Huh? Oh, that....."

Melina studied Ark's face and hesitated. Then Slayer who had just taken care of a Thanatos returned.

“In fact, we thought about descending after forming a new party and practicing our connected attacks. The Thanatos underneath are level 150 but there are more gallstones and less competitors. If one more level 80 person was added to Melina-nim, Leon and me then we could try it.”

However the user had entered with a NPC. It meant they could only hunt the safe level 100 monsters.

‘Damn, I didn’t think that far!’

Ark had been digging at Mt. Fargo so he knew everything was connected. Therefore he thought he could search through the entire dungeon. He didn’t know that the dungeon was divided into 3 layers.

‘We’ve returned to a place that we passed just a while ago. Then it will be meaningless if I spend a few more days here. In the end I’ll have to go downstairs.....’

It was essential for Ark to descend. In fact, Ark’s muscle pain had already gone away for a while now. He was the level 80 user that Slayer and Leon were hoping for. No, he had confidence that he could win against Slayer or Leon in a 1 on 1 battle. However, Ark had already explored the ruins for 3 hours and packed a lot of free loot. How could he just say ‘I’m strong again! Let’s go down!’ to them all of a sudden? He would clearly incur some bad feelings. Ark’s thoughts starting turning over at a rapid speed in his head. He then raised his head and looked at Melina.

‘Melina is actually the one in charge of this party! Then.....’

“I have to go to the bathroom for a while. Anyway, I’m not a big help so you guys can go first.”

“Yes, we’ll be near here.”

“I’ve finished.”

Ark re-joined the party shortly afterwards. Slayer and Leon were in the midst of fighting a Thanatos.

Bark bark bark! Bark bark bark!

Suddenly there was the sound of a dog in the dungeon. The party reflexively turned as they heard a sound they never imagined. Surprisingly a dog with the head of a Thanatos was rushing towards them!

“What, what the? There was also a monster like this here?”

“Damn, something like this.....no! Melina-nim, it’s dangerous!”

Leon shouted as he hurriedly lifted his rail gun. The monster had ignored Slayer and Leon and was rushing towards Melina. Just as it was about to bite the neck of the confused Melina! A man shot towards her like lightning.....

“Danger!”

Ark grabbed Melina’s body and rolled across the ground. And.....

“Ugh! So envious....ah, no! Well done Alan-nim! Nice! Now.....eh? W-wait a minute! There is.....”

They fell into the hole that led to the intermediate layer.

Bark bark bark! Bark bark bark!

The monster dog also plunged into the hole after them.

“Kyaaak!”

They fell for a long time through the hole. Then Melina screamed from the shock of the impact.

.....He didn’t know why she screamed. Ark was the one that had hit the

ground. But Melina didn't understand his thoughts and looked up at the hole before bursting out in confusion.

“It's a big deal! We fell into the intermediate layer!”

“And Melina-nim is lying on me.”

“Ah! I'm sorry!”

Melina hurriedly got up. Then she looked around and stuttered.

“A-Alan-nim, t-there.....a-a monster dog.....”

“Retreat! I'll stop this guy!”

Ark stood in front of Melina holding his sword. The red eyes from the approaching monster was in front of him. The bizarre creature had the body of a dog and the head of a Thanatos. Thankfully Melina was too busy being scared that she didn't realize something. The tail was shaking intensely!

‘Huhuhu, you cutie!’

A smile formed on Ark's mouth. It was natural. Ark was the owner of the monster dog. While the part was busy, Ark had summoned a hell hound with the body of a Thanatos. This was the method Ark came up with to force the party down into the intermediate level.

‘Slayer and Leon will do anything to impress Melina. If Melina was forced into the intermediate layer then of course.....’

“Melina-nim, just wait! We're coming!”

‘.....The two of them are entering.’

Ark grinned as he looked at the hell hound.

‘That's it! Stop now. You know what to do next?’

Ark conveyed through his eyes and the hell hound nodded before running away. Slayer, Leon and Milan fell from the top layer shortly afterwards.

“Melina-nim, are you hurt? Where is it?”

“It’s okay. The monster dog ran away. And Alan-nim protected me from the fall.....”

Melina blushed and replied. Slayer then sighed and looked up at the hole in the ceiling.

“But this is serious. We suddenly came down to the intermediate layer. Of all things.....”

Slayer looked at Ark with dissatisfied eyes. His expression seemed to indicate that he held Ark responsible.

“I’m sorry. I should’ve paid more attention.....”

“No! It’s not Alan’s fault. He was just rescuing me. It is my fault!”

Slayer instantly shook his head forcefully at Melina’s words.

“It was a surprise and you didn’t do anything wrong! We’ll do as promised. We will go on together. Let’s not worry about the future.”

“That’s right! Alan-nim and Melina-nim, you don’t have to worry!”

“Please don’t worry. We promised to take responsibility no matter what. It’s fine if we die as long as Melina-nim and Alan-nim can get out safely!”

“Yes, just believe in us!”

‘Those fools.’

Ark inwardly laughed as he looked at the two of them. If Ark had fallen downstairs by himself then they probably would’ve made up an excuse to get rid of him. It would be different if Melina fell. But he couldn’t just push Melina into the hole. That’s why he used the hell hound to fix the situation. This was the result. The remaining members descended a layer like Ark intended. And there was one more problem to solve.

‘It should be back around now.....’

Bark bark bark! Bark bark bark!

Then the sound of a dog was once again heard from the opposite side. Slayer and Leon reflexively turned and their faces stiffened. It wasn't because the monster dog was running towards the group. The problem was the huge shadow coming behind it! It was a Thanatos two times larger than the one upstairs.

"T-that damn dog pulled a Thanatos?"

"Oh my god! Level 150! It isn't someone we can take care of with our current power!"

"But this is a dead end. There is nowhere to run away!"

"Ugh, damn! Leon, take care of that dog!"

Tututung! Tututung!

Leon's rail gun subsequently shot out rays of light. The hell hound was created with a level 100 Thanatos so its stats were relatively high. However, it had been chased by a Thanatos so it only took a few shots from the rail gun to melt away. Now the only problem was the Thanatos! After the hell hound died, the Thanatos immediately headed towards the group.

"Should we take out our battle suits?"

"No. We've fallen into the intermediate level so we'll encounter many of these guys no matter how careful we are. It will be hopeless if we can't even take care of one. So we should use the battle suit sparingly. Let's just take care of this one! Melina-nim, Milan, cover us!"

Slayer shouted as he took out a shield. They never mentioned Ark's name even in this situation. It was because he didn't use his power from the beginning. It was natural when considering what happened up to now.....

'I'm different now!'

Slayer used his shield to block the Thanatos' sharp claws. It wasn't an

exaggeration to say that a level 100 and a level 150 monster were completely different. It was two times larger and had twice as much power. The shield that stopped hundreds of attacks in the upper layer was pushed back.

“Slayer! Dammit, Continuous Shooting!”

Tututung! Tututung!

Rays poured out from Leon’s rail gun. Fortunately Slayer avoided being damaged by the Thanatos but the situation had changed. Close combat was possible because of Slayer. So far he had executed the tank role but he couldn’t receive the attacks of the level 150 Thanatos by himself. Melina poured her recovery skills like a waterfall but it wasn’t possible to catch up to the speed that his health fell. In the end Slayer’s health fell to 30%. Slayer murmured feebly.

“I made a mistake.”

‘.....Now!’

Ark flew towards the Thanatos. He stood in front of the wobbly Slayer and blocked the attack.

Snap!

His bones shook from the tremendous impact.

“Alan-nim?”

Slayer looked at Ark with a puzzled expression. Ark stumbled back and said with a smile.

“Ugh, I’m fine. Slayer-nim, this isn’t the time to give up. I’m also here so let’s fight together. This is a chance to show your true worth to Melina. A man won’t give up!”

“Ah! T-that’s right! I see!”

Slayer became fired up and raised his shield. Slayer was actually thinking

differently. He only pretended to become fired up so he could show a nice, final impression to Melina. But the situation was different once the battle began again. The attacks of the Thanatos became weaker. Even if the attack had the same power as before, there were more chances to counterattack. Slayer's health that was on 30% no longer fell. Melina's recovery skills hadn't become stronger so it meant the damage received was reduced. And.....

“Slayer-nim, Leon-nim, now!”

“Ohhhh! Acceleration Iron!”

“Super magnetic shot!”

There were loud cries as the mace and rail gun bullets hit. The Thanatos' health reached the bottom and it collapsed.

“Kyaak! We did it! Awesome!”

Melina jumped and cheered. But Slayer and Leon looked sombre.

“Alan-nim, for a while.....”

Melina studied Slayer's face and approached.

“What happened?”

‘It's come.’

They were able to win this battle thanks to Ark. That didn't mean that Ark took care of it alone. What Ark did was interrupt the Thanatos' attack rhythm. He focused his attacks on the joints of the leg. It was an advanced technique so Melina and Milan hadn't noticed. However Slayer and Leon had combat experience so they noticed it straight away. And they felt a surge of betrayal!

“Have you been tricking us?”

“I said it at the beginning. It will be hard for me to fight properly for a while because of muscle pain.”

“I’ve never heard of that state before!”

“Even if it was true, shouldn’t it be released long before now? Why didn’t you help us until now?”

“Yes, I recovered 40 minutes after we entered.”

“40 minutes.....then you tricked us to receive 3 hours’ worth of experience and loot for free.....”

Slayer’s eyes trembled. Ark sighed and said.

“I admit it. I deliberately tricked you. But it was for the two of you.”

“What? You say that now.....”

“The two of you, don’t you have something in mind with Melina-nim?”

Slayer and Leon closed their mouths at his words.

“I knew it. It was the reason why I stayed in the background. It was in order to give you two a chance to appeal to Melina-nim. Doesn’t it seem cooler if 2 people deal with all the monsters? So far the two of you have been enough. This time is also the same thing. I didn’t use my skills and strength in order to make it look like the two of you defeated the Thanatos. So I deliberately only helped when Slayer-nim was in danger.”

It fact that wasn’t the only reason. One of the conditions of his occupation quest was to rescue his colleagues! Ark knew that it was possible to win against the Thanatos if he fought. He needed to increase the number of times he saved a colleague. And he had to make sure Melina didn’t sense it. So it was possible to convince Slayer and Leon with those words.

“Amway, I was very impressed that the two of you helped me for 3 hours without a word of complaint. So I made up my mind. I will do my best to make sure you two have a good impression with Melina. We fell into the intermediate layer so I have no choice but to enter the battle. But I’ll only do it if the situation deteriorates and the two of you need help.”

“Uh.....”

“Well we were originally planning to enter the intermediate layer.....”

Slayer and Leon looked at each other.

“This might be a chance. The two of you came down to this layer to save Melina-nim. Therefore Melina-nim is feeling guilty inside. If you show the two of you struggling against the Thanatos then she will receive a better impression of you.”

These words ended the indecision.

“Certainly.....okay! Like Alan-nim said, this is an opportunity given by the heavens!”

“Yes, if we have Alan-nim then the intermediate layer won’t be a problem!”

In fact, Slayer and Leon had no other choice. It would be hard for them to escape the intermediate layer if they kicked Ark out of the party now. And Ark also used compelling words to convince them. This was to relieve any bad feelings if he ever met those users again!

“We misunderstood!”

“Thank you in advance!”

Slayer and Leon firmly grabbed Ark’s hand. However they were unaware that this was the beginning of a nightmare. In fact, Ark had calculated it carefully before making his suggestion. Since then Ark only helped Leon and Slayer when they were barely surviving. Thus they were in danger many times.....

“Alan-nim, it is dangerous! It is up to the guardian to protect his colleagues! Ugh!”

Slayer poured out his heart into protecting them. If they protected their colleagues then of course Melina would be impressed! Every time there was a battle, their health and mana would reach the bottom. That was also Ark’s desire. Ark’s purpose was to find the ruins. He hadn’t discovered in the upper

layer so Ark had descended to the intermediate layer. There was no time to investigate the area thoroughly.

‘But it is different when they run out of health and mana.’

It meant they needed to take a break after the fight. While their health and mana were recovering, it gave Ark time to look around. Therefore Ark intentionally made sure that his health and mana fell to the bottom in every battle. He took care of any dissatisfaction by saying.

“I’m sorry. I’m so clumsy in battle.....”

“It’s nothing. This happened because of me. Thank you for trying hard.”

Melina felt guilty so she was okay with everything.

“Did you hear? Melina-nim apologized to us. It is important to give an impression of a hard fight. Our favourable image is rising.”

“Huhuhuhu. Thank you. Settling it this way.....”

Melina had surrounded herself with 2 wolves. They would smile happily every time their bodies became tattered in the battle. Ark controlled the party from the back and could search the intermediate layer. However, it had been 2 hours since entering the intermediate layer. It was a total of 5 hours if he added the hours spent in the upper layer so Slayer was getting tired. No, he was trying to make a good impression on Melina.

“Let’s end it here and look for the exit. Now we know we can hunt in the intermediate layer so the group will gather to continue tomorrow.”

And just as they found the exit.

Bark bark bark! Bark bark bark!

A monster dog once again came running. There were 10 Thanatos chasing behind it!

“Heok! D-dammit! Another one of those dogs! No! If we get caught then

we're dead! Run!"

Slayer screamed and ran away from the exit. This situation repeated a few times. The monster dog seemed to sense whenever they would find an exit and would use the Thanatos following it to herd them deeper into the dungeon.

"A curse! This hunt is cursed!"

Slayer and Leon grabbed their heads and screamed. However they failed to notice something. The monster dog always appeared after Ark went to the toilet.

'Huhuhu. You won't get any chances to exit.'

Ark laughed as he looked at the gasping Slayer and Leon. The hell hound mercilessly drove the Thanatos towards them. Ark used the hell hound to herd them towards places he hadn't searched yet. This was all to achieve Ark's goal! In New World, he once stayed all up night for two days in order to find an item he desired. Ark valued this before getting a good sleep.

'This is a spacious dungeon so it would take quite a while to investigate. I'm sorry but I'm still not finished. They should at least stay until I finish searching the intermediate level.'

Slayer was the one suffering. But this was a game so he wasn't concerned about his condition.

"Pant pant pant, that monster. Why is it doing this to us?"

The frustrated Slayer wheezed with a spiritless face. But he still had some spirit left. The upper layer only required 2~3 hours but the intermediate layer was several times larger. And there weren't a lot of parties here so it was overflowing with Thanatos. Thus they were like zombies by the time 15 hours had passed. Meanwhile Ark and Milan had rested before entering so they weren't as tired!

“I-it isn’t possible anymore.”

“No! There are no tents. If we go to sleep then we’ll die!”

Slayer flopped down on the ground and Leon grabbed his collar while yelling. The tent was an item where users could safely enter hibernation mode while in dungeons. However, the village was right near here so Slayer and Leon hadn’t bothered preparing tents.

“I, I.....I really can’t hold out anymore. My eyes feel like it will fall out. I’d rather die.”

Slayer and Leon had been playing the game for more than 15 hours before meeting Ark. They only played an average of 12 hours a day but they held out because of Melina. Yet another 15 hours had passed. It was a total of 30 hours! They couldn’t concentrate on the battle anymore. But Ark didn’t allow them to abandon it halfway through.

“Gather your spirits! If you fall down here then we’ll be in trouble! Slayer-nim, Leon-nim, shouldn’t a man protect Melina-nim until the end? Do you want to leave Melina-nim by herself in a monster infested dungeon? The more difficult and painful it is, the more you two will shine in her eyes! That is a man!”

“Ohhh.....I’m a man.....”

Slayer and Leon moved their zombie like bodies at Ark’s encouragement. But Melina’s eyes were looking at Ark.

‘At first he didn’t fight properly so I thought he was brazen to enter the party..... It was inconvenient.....but he didn’t show any dissatisfaction with the situation and even encouraged his colleagues.....he also isn’t patronizing like Slayer-nim and Leon-nim.....yes, I gain energy every time I see Alan-nim.’

Rather than Slayer and Leon who fought to attract her attention, Melina was more impressed by Ark who encouraged his colleagues. But another pair of

eyes were looking at Ark differently.

‘I know it! That monster that pulled the Thanatos! That’s right, it is similar to the dogs that Hyung-nim produced on the way here! The person controlling the dog is clearly Hyung-nim. Hyung-nim is keeping the party here to look for the ruins. When I think about it, I also couldn’t rest for one day while searching on Mt. Fargo. Then we can only leave this dungeon after searching through this entire layer?’

Milan knew. The horror that the level 80 Slayer and Leon couldn’t imagine! The level 150 Thanatos hadn’t appeared because of the hell hound. This was all Ark controlling it from the rear!

“Scary! Hyung-nim is a scary man!”

“Damn, I’m in trouble. It is difficult!”

A man with slicked back hair muttered impatiently. His name was Bain. He had joined the large company Laius when he was young and his success meant he was now the director of one of the major projects. The place he recently became interested in was Mt. Fargo. Compared to other areas, there were a large number of monsters that had gallstones.

‘According to the latest theory, the gallstones are formed from high density energy accumulating in the body of the monster. In other words, it means there is a source of high density energy nearby. If it is a lot higher than other areas.....lode! A lode of energy might be hidden!’

Development and maintenance of a civilization required energy. After the humans entered the universe, it led to a revival of different energy sources. It was the same for the Rama and Aschulat. Thus the galaxy was now struggling from a chronic lack of energy. That’s why there was a war as soon as resources were found in the Bellin constellation.

‘In other words, it will become money. Now swords and guns are part of the primitive age. The important thing is energy. The person who controlled the energy would dominate the universe. If I can find the energy lode at Mt. Fargo then I can be promoted!’

Bain managed to convince the company to build a research centre here. However, they had explored for a fortnight and still hadn’t found the energy lode.

No, it was becoming increasingly possible that the energy lode didn’t exist.

“This is serious. I’m the one who established the research centre here and drove the project. If an energy lode doesn’t exist here then I’ll be held responsible. In the worst case situation I might be stripped of my position! N-no! I’m still young! I can’t be unemployed at such a young age! If I can’t find the lode then I should at least find something else!”

Bain held his head and frantically worried.

“Director-nim!”

A guard came running in and shouted.

“This is an urgent report! A high density energy reaction was detected on the radar searching the area!”

“High density energy reaction? A lode? Yes? Is it a lode?”

“No, that is.....”

Kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang!

The ground shook like an earthquake was occurring.

Enemy Unknown

‘.....Sheesh!’

Ark clicked his tongue. The interior of Mt. Fargo was divided into three layers. Ark and his companions moved from the upper layer to the intermediate layer underneath it. And the dungeon was inside a mountain so naturally the layer became wider as they descended.

‘It is impossible for me to move to the lowest layer even in a group. But I should take this opportunity while I have companions to fully explore the intermediate level.’

Ark determined. And he used the hell hounds to lure the Thanatos and herd the group back inside the dungeon. Unfortunately the timing matched up to when 3 other parties were at the exit.

“Please help! I’ll give you a gallstone if you help us!”

The breathless Slayer uttered an SOS! He made an alliance with the 3 parties and they disposed of the Thanatos and hell hounds.

‘Damn, only 2~3 more hours and I would’ve explored everywhere in this layer.....’

It was a very regrettable thing for Ark.

“I’m alive!”

“Now I’m able to sleep!”

The zombie like Slayer and Leon burst out as they exited the dungeon. Melina also quietly cheered.

‘It is easy to understand why those two guys are eager.’

Ark initially couldn’t understand Slayer and Leon when he first joined the party. This was a game. Most of it might be the power of science but there

were plenty of pretty women. Melina wasn't extremely pretty compared to others. Now he could understand why Slayer and Leon were crazy about her. She had wandered the intermediate layer for 20 hours and hadn't complained once. Of course, the party was in the intermediate layer because of her so she wasn't in a position to complain. But she had clearly reached her limits. Yet she still listened to Slayer and Leon's silly jokes and laughed sincerely. Men went crazy over little things like this.

'Is this the end for today?'

Ark looked at the party and said to them.

"Everybody is tired so let's return to the village first."

"Yes, let's go quickly."

Ark suddenly took the role of the leader in the party. Ark aggressively pushed Leon and Slayer when they were tired so now they were used to listening to him. And Slayer who was the actual leader had panicked in the beginning.

'I couldn't search everywhere but the income isn't bad.'

He gained 2 levels and reached level 82 thanks to steadily hunting the level 150 Thanatos. And the Thanatos also dropped at least 80 gold. It was shared among the party except for Milan so every person got 20 gold. This wasn't bad but there were some separate loot.

-Gallstone

Item Type: Reinforcement Materials

It is a special material that acts as the catalyst to fuse two weapons or two equipment together to improve the performance. The improvement will depend on 3 conditions, the materials used, the skill of the artisan and the rating of the gallstone.

However, if the gallstone is used to strength the same item more than 3

times then the probability of success will fall.

<Performance of the equipment will improve by 7~12% and an additional option created>

Gallstone! It was the reason why users gathered at Mt. Fargo. This time they obtained 9 gallstones. There were 3 lower class and 6 intermediate class.

“It is quite vague.....”

“Slayer-nim and Leon-nim have already strengthened their equipment a few times? Then you’ll need intermediate level so let’s split the intermediate between the two of you. I’m willing to receive the 3 beginner ones.”

Ark neatly organized the situation. It was natural for intermediate class to be higher than lower class. If he looked at the price then it was quite a bit of damage. But Ark conceded it easily. There was still tomorrow. He was going to make sure that they cleared 100% of Mt. Fargo’s dungeon with this party. The bizarre love triangle between Slayer, Leon and Melina made the group easy to steer.

“Then let’s stop here today and I’ll see you in 6 hours.”

“Huh? 6 hours?”

“We need at least 10 hours.....”

“What use is sleeping that long? It is better to earn more money. Right now there aren’t a lot of users yet but that will change once this area becomes a formal sector. The users will grow exponentially and it won’t be easy to find Thanatos anymore. After we become accustomed to the intermediate layer tomorrow, we should go down to the bottom layer.”

“B-bottom layer?”

“Slayer-nim and Leon-nim both gained 2 levels on this hunt. If both of you are this strong then it will be fine to descend to the bottom layer.”

“I agree.”

Melina smiled at Ark and nodded. Her words made the situation simple.

“I understand. 6 hours.....yes, we’ll meet here in 6 hours.”

The party disbanded and just as they were about to shut down the connection.

Kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang!

The ground shook like an earthquake was occurring.

“What, what the? This is?”

Ark wasn’t the only one confused. All the pioneers in the village made exclamations of confusion at the sudden roaring sound. Their eyes looked at a huge rocket that had plunged into the village. Several rockets had fallen all over the village like meteorites.

“W-what is that? What’s going on.....?”

“Is the Laius company doing something?”

The pioneers murmured to each other. Suddenly a huge number of shadows started flowing out from a rocket lodged in the ground. They were people approximately 1 metre and wearing black rags? Aliens? No, their species didn’t matter. The important thing was the weapons in their hands! There was huge scythes, machine guns and RPGs!

“What, what the? These guys are?”

“S-space pirates? Space pirates are attacking!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

At the same time there was a burst of heat from the village entrance. The people wearing black rags started to rampage towards the pioneers.

“Ugh, those bastards! Fight! They’re all enemies!”

The pioneers also took out their weapons. However the number of people

wearing black rags wasn't a joke. They numbered more than the people gathered in the village! The few pioneers at the entrance of the village were trampled by the black rags entering. This wasn't a formal sector so it didn't have any defensive facilities. Once the black rags entered, the scattered pioneers couldn't fight properly and were soon defeated.

"T-this is ridiculous!"

"We're supposed to sleep! Let's just die!"

Slayer and Leon grabbed their heads and screamed. But the black rags wouldn't understand their circumstances. There was a scream and the black rags appeared right in front of Ark's group. Ark shouted in a desperate tone.

"Slayer-nim, Leon-nim, please be steady! We need you!"

"But there are so many of them....."

Pepeng! Kukukukung!

Then a trailer truck right next to them exploded. When he turned his head, 10 people wearing black rags were jumping over the collapsed truck. They also fired a shower of bullets!

"Ugh! I can't die like this! We have to live and return! I can't die!"

Slayer placed a giant shield on the ground and shouted. The shield had a tremendous weight so the defense power must be at least 400. It couldn't be stored in the bag so it had to be inconveniently carried around like a tortoise shell on his back. But the defense and high resistance couldn't be compared to any other shield. It was a moving wall!

Pepeng-!

"Ugh! Dammit! RPG!"

Slayer cursed as he was blown back a few metres. One of the black rags had fired a RPG. Even the moving wall couldn't ignore the damage from the RPG.

“Damn! Precision Aim! Straight Fire! Super Magnetic Shot!”

Tututung! Tututung!

Rays continuously flashed from Leon’s rail gun. Headshot! The head of the black rag firing the RPG exploded and it collapsed. However Slayer was no longer playing the role of the shield so the black rags managed to flock around the group. And one of them swung a scythe.

“Danger!”

Ark avoided the scythe and moved towards Melina. A sickle was also heading towards her! He couldn’t afford to worry about Slayer or Leon’s sensibilities at the moment. Ark grabbed her waist and used taekwondo to move his body.

“Alan-nim.....”

Melina’s eyes widened. But there was no room for Ark to answer.

“Fire Eagle P-40!”

Pepeng-!

Flames shot out and the black rags bounced back. The rag was torn open to reveal an alien that looked like a frog.

“Kero clan? Isn’t that the Kero clan? Why are these guys.....?”

Melina cried out with surprise and Leon turned around.

“This isn’t the time to be discouraged. Please help. Milan, protect Melina-nim!”

“Huh? Yes Hyung-nim!”

Milan grabbed his machine gun and jumped to Melina’s side. Melina scattered her recovery and buffs and Slayer and Leon soon got back into position. Slayer stopped the Kero’s attacks with his shield and broke their heads using his mace while Leon stayed behind and shot them. Ark also

wasn't idle. He was mindful of the atmosphere in the dungeon and had only used Carmela's sword. Now his left hand held the Fire Eagle while his right hand held Carmela's sword.

Kakang! Kakakakak! Pepeng!

He stopped the scythe with his sword while he fired at the Kero's head with his shotgun.

'These fellows are too weak to worry about. But.....'

Ark eyed the flames rising from the village. It was like the village was a candy and ants were swarming all over it. The odds weren't in their favour even if the pioneers in the village united to fight directly. It was especially bad thanks to the element of surprise. So the Kero swarmed over the scattered pioneers and killed them.

'We won't be able to hold up much longer. No, there is no meaning even if we endure it. There is only a low chance of success even if the power of the users were collected. If I gather the users.....'

Ark suddenly raised his head.

'That's it! A place where the users can gather!'

Ark was looking at Laius' research centre located on one side of Mt. Fargo. It was a large building made of metal with a shield surrounding it. It was a research centre so it had a large number of defense facilities. His worries didn't last long.

"Slayer-nim, Leon-nim, we have to move over there!"

The two of them immediately realized Ark's intention. Slayer took a deep breath and grabbed his shield.

"Okay! Stay behind me! Steel Dash!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Slayer charged through the Kero clan like a large truck. Ark who was shooting behind him with Leon shouted.

“Melina-nim, can you use any amplification magic?”

“Yes I can.”

“Then walk with Milan. Milan, I want you to shout as loud as possible. Tell people to gather at Laius’ research centre. Slayer-nim, we need as much allies as possible. We need to look for nearby pioneers while heading towards the research centre. If our numbers increase then the risk will decrease even if we take a while.”

“I understand what you’re saying!”

“Then.....let’s break through!”

Tututung! Tututung! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Ark and Slayer ran across the village.

“Pant pant pant!”

“Pant pant pant, pant pant pant!”

Rough breathing could be heard. It was reasonable. They had fought without any breaks for many hours and then unidentified enemies suddenly attacked. It was natural for the two of them to breathe harshly.

‘Phew, we’ve arrived.’

Ark panted as he looked around. It was the Laius building made of metal and surrounded by a shield.

‘The danger has passed for the moment. Now the problem is.....’

While Ark was busy thinking.

“Thank you.”

“I’m alive thanks to you.”

10 users flocked around Ark. They had either heard Milan’s yell on the way to the research centre or the party helped them directly. The reason they flocked to Ark was because the formal leader Slayer had started napping in a corner the moment they arrived at the research centre. Therefore Ark was considered the one in charge. They saw that he didn’t give up to the end and even through himself in front of bullets that were about to hit an ally. Of course, he didn’t do this because of kindness.

‘There are 1,000 of them. When combined with those who moved to other areas, there are thousands of them. The situation would change if there was no shield around the research centre. The most important thing is to gather troops!’

This was the first reason. And the second one was.....

-Proof of Faith: Rescue your colleagues (142/200)

It was the conditions of his occupation quest! Ark didn’t forget about it no matter how much the circumstances deteriorated. However, Ark was inevitably seen as a person who sacrificed himself for other users. Their eyes were all saying thank you. Anyway, many people managed to take refuge in the research centre thanks to Ark’s efforts.

‘There are approximately 150 people.....’

Ark had brought around 60 people. And 90 people had taken refuge on their own. Of course there were many more pioneers gathered at Mt. Fargo. But most of them were inside the dungeon. And the Kero clan had controlled everywhere except for the research centre. Even if they appeared they would just be defeated by the overwhelming numbers. Therefore these were the only pioneers that could oppose them. A user then spoke with a pained expression.

“I don’t know what’s going on. Does anyone know who they are?”

Everybody gathered shook their heads.

“Anyway, we should worry about the future rather than their identities. They stopped their attacks for a while but they are gathering in front of the research centre. They’re probably arranging their formations. We can’t think this place is safe considering their power.”

There was a heavy silence after Ark’s words. Mt. Fargo was located quite deeply in the Outlands. It meant that most users here had a high level. They had plenty of fighting experience so he didn’t need to explain how severe the situation was. This wasn’t a formal sector so it didn’t even have a Fairy. Like Ark, all the pioneers registered at a nearby sector and walked here. Most users stayed here for days to collect the gallstones. If they were killed in battle then they would lose all that experience.

“Everyone needs to unite and discuss how to defeat the enemies.”

“There needs to be a chain of command. If everyone plays separately then we’ll just be killed.”

“Then let’s pick a commander.”

As expected from experienced users.

“I recommend Alan-nim.”

A user with a tattoo carved on his face said.

“It isn’t simply because you saved me. During a sudden attack he was able to make a quick judgement to make the research centre the base. He also led everyone here so I think he is the best fit to be the commander. There are people here that are higher levelled than Alan-nim but level is a separate matter.”

“I also have the same idea.”

“We don’t know each other well enough so Alan-nim is clearly the best fit for command. But that isn’t the problem. They came in separately so they’ll

probably disagree.....”

The man pointed at the users scattered around. 90 people had sought refuge on their own.

“It will be meaningly if some of the soldiers don’t listen to the commander.”

“I’ll talk with those people.”

The man with the tattoo said and stood up.

“Everybody pay attention!”

A group of people appeared inside the research institute and shouted. It was Director Bain of the research institute and his guards.

“Everybody is puzzled by the sudden situation. But please don’t worry. In case of unforeseen calamities, the shield around this research institute can stop 5 missiles at the same time. It won’t easily collapse from the enemy’s attack. We also sent a carrier to the Laius branch in Sidellin when this attack started. Laius’ defense army will arrive within 24 hours at the latest!”

“Then we just need to endure for 1 day?”

“We can live?”

“It is good that I came here to escape!”

The crowd of pioneers started murmuring at Bain’s words. Then Bain smiled and said.

“Please rest assured. The Laius company will take responsibility and protect everybody. However everybody needs to pay a fee.”

“F-fee?”

“Yes, 50 gold per person. This is the fee to stay in the research institute.”

“No way! Asking for money in such a situation?”

“This world isn’t free. This facility is the private property of the Laius

company. Our guards will also be arriving tomorrow to rescue everyone. Then isn't it natural to pay a fee? In addition, the guards will be under my jurisdiction once they reach the research centre so they'll have to obey my commands. If you don't like it then you should leave."

"Don't make me laugh you asshole!"

"How despicable! Saying this now?"

The pioneers cursed as they took out their japtm. But Ark had no intention of abusing them. No, he was thinking that it was lucky. He took shelter in the centre because it was possible to make a base from it but defense was defense. The shield had to endure. He couldn't guarantee their safety and it was difficult to escape the crisis with 150 people. Fortunately Bain had sent a carrier message to the guards from the company.

It would take one day for them to arrive. And the facility had a large number of defences so it wouldn't be that hard to endure for one day. In other words, their lives were worth 50 gold. It was amazing that they wanted to pay a fee to use the facility in this situation but the value wasn't that high compared to their lives.

'Even so.....that guy has quite a bit of business sense?'

The pioneers needed the institute. The facility had a large number of defences but the Kero clan would eventually defeat the shield. No matter how good the facility, a minimum number of forces were required. But Bain didn't say a word about it. He was acting like he was helping one-sidedly. Therefore the users had no choice but to pay the fee. Ark had only been here for two days and he already gained two levels. When combined with the journey to this place, that was a total of 3 levels. 50 gold wasn't a lot compared to the experience he would have to give up. It wasn't necessary to talk about the users who had been here longer than Ark.

'You don't need to hurry. I....eh?'

Ark who had been looking at Bain suddenly narrowed his eyes. While the pioneers were busy cursing and throwing japtem at Bain, a hazy shadow seemed to be moving. He could recognize what it was with one glance. The blurry shadow was similar to when Ark was in stealth mode.

“Who is it? Why would someone be using Stealth here? Eh?”

Ark stared at the shadow with confusion. If Ark noticed them then he could see through stealth with his Clairvoyance ability. Narrowing his eyes made his Clairvoyance ability rise. The blurry shadow was surprisingly someone that Ark knew. It was Valencia! Valencia was with the robed man who stopped their previous fight and some other people.

‘Was he involved in Valencia’s bribery matter? No, why is that guy moving using stealth mode?’

Something.....something stank.....

He smelt something awful!

“I don’t understand but I can’t pretend not to see this.”

Ark grinned as he looked at Valencia’s group.

“Uh Hyung-nim?”

Milan who had been cursing Bain looked around doubtfully. But Ark had already changed into a ghost and followed after Valencia.

“Here.”

A man muttered in a low voice. The man with the jaw square was Valencia. Next to him was the robed man and a few others.

“This is the panel where the main energy supplying the research centre’s shield is. If we destroy this then the shield will be released.”

“Thanks for the good work.”

“Then the promise.....?”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ve already contacted them. You will come with me to that place as soon as this finishes. And you will become a glorious warrior.”

The robed man replied with a light smile. Valencia made a satisfied expression before lowering his voice and asking.

“By the way, what are you looking for here? Isn’t it simply the gallstones?”

“You will come to realize the reason once this situation finished.”

“Can’t you just tell me?”

“I want to but there is no time. The galactic federation isn’t filled with morons. We prepared a Drop Ship that looked like a meteorite but they will soon notice our presence. Even if that isn’t the case, pioneers will soon resurrect at the Fairy and they will tell either the federation or the Laius company. We have to hurry if we want to finish before they arrive.”

“I understand. But.....this panel is protected by a thicker partition than I thought. It seems like general explosives won’t work on it.....if we attempt many explosions then people inside the research institute will sense it.”

“Just leave it to me.”

The robed man approached the giant metal sphere containing the panel for the shield. He muttered something and a red light appeared around his palms. He placed his hands on the thick partition protecting the panel and it started to melt like a candle.

‘Those bastards, what are they doing now?’

Ark looked at Valencia’s group with an amazed expression. Ark had been secretly following Valencia using Stealth. Ark had chased after these guys because he smelt something foul. According to Ark’s experience, they were planning to grab a weakness so they could squeeze something out

later. However their ulterior motives were more serious than Ark expected. These guys were located at the rear of the research centre. While two soldiers were guarding them, Valencia and the robed man were doing something to a metal sphere. Judging by their conversation, he guessed that it supplied the power to the institute's shield. They were hiding here to destroy the energy panel. If he analysed the overall situation.....

‘Oh my god! Those bastards, are they behind the space pirates?’

He could only think like that.

‘Those space pirates attacked a place cut off from the federation. Those bastards really.....’

But now wasn't the time to be thinking about that. He wasn't sure what skill it was but the robed man was melting the sphere protecting the panel. At this rate it seemed like it was going to completely melt in a few minutes. It would blow up! The shield around the research institute would collapse.

‘If the shield is turned off then we have no way to stop them. It was likely that everyone will be wiped out before the guards from the Laius company arrives. I have to stop it somehow!’

–Melina-nim, can you hear me?

Ark immediately whispered towards Melina.

–Alan-nim? Where are you? This place is a mess.

–For certain reasons I'm at the rear of the research centre. Is there anyone you can ask for help in the area? No, the centre's director. Please pass on my words to the director.

–I can't do that right now. People are angry at his words and arguments have started. I don't have a way to get to him.

‘.....Dammit!’

The situation was so messy that it was impossible to ask for help!

–What about Slayer-nim and Leon-nim? Those two, have they exited yet?

–They’re dozing in a corner.

–Then bring them along with Milan! Hurry! I’ll explain later!

–Huh? Huh? U-understood. I’ll give it a try.

He heard Melina’s reply but the circumstances meant he couldn’t wait. The man’s hand was already reaching through the partition. The shield around the energy was so tough that explosives couldn’t melt it but underneath were just mechanical parts. One grenade could destroy it. All the shields would then be released. Everybody would die.

‘I have to buy some time. However the problem is Valencia and those three.’

He might’ve killed him on Beltana but Ark had never fought directly with Valencia. Ark had grown since Beltana but the leader of an armoured platoon wasn’t an easy opponent. There was no guarantee he could win. Valencia also had the robed man and two henchmen with him. The odds were against him if Ark started a fight.

‘If it is Valencia.....’

“Hey! Who’s this? Valencia?”

Ark considered for a while before suddenly jumping out and shouting. The robed man flinched and his hand dropped from the sphere when Ark walked out. Valencia and the robed man moved in front of the sphere to hide the hole from Ark’s eyes.

“Who are you?”

“Me? I am this person.”

Ark laughed and turned off the function of the Hyde Helmet. Valencia and his henchmen’s faces warped.

“Ark! How did you get here?”

“I’ll tell you. I was looking around the institute.....but why are you gathered in a place like this? Do you go far away to find a place to pee? I don’t think you have time to be playing around when we’re cut off from the federation. You were the armoured platoon leader on Beltana so you should know this.”

“.....Do you want to die?”

“That’s not it. You should ask if I want to kill you. And the answer is yes.”

Ark carelessly said towards Valencia.

“There were a lot of people around at the time so I left it alone but it really makes me furious. Honestly, aren’t you someone who already lost to me? Why did I have to be shamed after that situation? So I was thinking. I should step on you in our next encounter. And here you are! Didn’t we meet?”

“You dare speak like that.....”

Valencia’s face turned red and he took one step forward. Then the robed man sent him a look. The two henchmen also stepped forward next to Valencia. Ark’s lips curled up.

“I see how it is. I was thinking you left too obediently at that time. You didn’t have any subordinates to help you. Fine, that is just like you. Even on Beltana you were also surrounded by your followers. Okay, I’ll jump forward even though I’m afraid. I’ll knock all of you down in the same way. Let’s jump hey”

Valencia growled in a rough voice.

“Belt, Seth, step aside!”

‘.....Just as I thought.’

Ark’s eyes narrowed and he inwardly laughed. Ark had met a lot of guys like Valencia in New World. They were arrogant and treated others badly. Their main feature was their ego. In other words, Ark could make them respond the

way he wanted by scratching at their ego. The robed man then frowned and yelled.

“Sir Valencia!”

“This won’t take long.”

“Of course. I would become embarrassing if I took a long time to defeat you!”

“Impertinent fellow! I’ll tear you apart!”

Valencia ran towards Ark while grabbing a rod from his waist. At the same time a blue ray rose from the rod. It was the beam sword common in SF movies. It had high attack power so it was a quite expensive item.

‘I’m a bit envious.....’

However Ark’s equipment also wasn’t inferior.

“Impact Sword!”

It was the Impact Sword he obtained from the pyramid! It was a level 40 sword but it was a unique sword with higher damage than Carmela’s sword. The disadvantage was that it was a two handed sword so Ark didn’t use it as often these days but he took it out for this situation. Currently he used the Fire Eagle often but Ark’s main strength was in martial arts. And the opponent was also attacking with a sword. There was no need to complicate the situation with guns.

‘A 1 on 1 battle with a sword.....I’m so thankful that tears are falling.’

“Die!”

Valencia brought down the beam sword and shouted. Ark blocked the beam sword and replied.

“I don’t want to!”

Pajijjik!

Sparks flew as the two blades collided with each other. Valencia withdrew when Ark blocked his attack and took a deep breath before unleashing a series of quick attacks. It was to the extent that afterimages of dozens of blades formed!

‘Eh, eh, eh? This is?’

Ark winced with a confused expression. Usually smug guys like Valencia were 90% empty. But Valencia turned out to be a surprisingly formidable opponent. He could sense it from the first strike. And the angle of the sword and the stance was remarkable. It was clear that he had experience with the sword. Furthermore, the blade of the beam sword was made with light. Except for the rod, the remaining weight was 0. The sword was so light it was like his hands were empty. Naturally the speed of his sword swings would be incredibly fast. In addition, the light moved more freely than a normal sword so it could be moved at difficult angles.

This was the reason why users were enthusiastic about lightsabers.

‘But.....’

Pajijijik! Kakakak!

Ark brought down his sword with incredibly speed and Valencia jumped back with surprise. The sword barely passed by the tip of his nose.

‘Speed isn’t the one thing required to swing a sword.’

Ark had gone through training with Lee Myung-ryong who wanted to turn him into Superman! Not a lot of people knew this but he knew one of the best swordsmen in the country.

-I’m opposed to the use of weapons but it isn’t a bad technique to learn.

Those were his words.

And he threw everything at Ark who was his student.

‘Valencia....he seems to have learnt martial arts like kendo. That’s why he

has confidence in his sword skills. Yes, it definitely isn't normal. He clearly has some skills. But.....I shed twice the amount of blood when learning fencing!'

Lee Myung-ryong's acquaintances were as skilled as he was. They knew that person's student wouldn't die so easily. So they firmly beat him up. He didn't die. He had to eat an iron pill because he would get nosebleeds every day. But he didn't die. Ark realized it at that moment. He would do anything in order to live. And Ark was trained in swordplay. A sword to help him live!

'My weight is different from yours.'

It was actually different. It was a two handed sword against a lightsaber. There was a huge difference in speed but speed wasn't that important. It was how and where he struck. One attack accomplished correctly was better than one hundred wasteful attacks. And a heavy sword wasn't necessarily slow. If he used inertia then a heavy object could fall quicker. There were several core principles to using a sword.

'Although he avoided it.....'

Half of him made sure that it could be avoided. Ark was convinced that he could win in a sword battle. However, if it became too one-sided then Belt and Seth might interrupt.

'I need to make it look like we're on a similar level until Slayer arrives!'

"Why? Are you scared? You definitely should be frightened."

Of course Ark didn't forget to mix in some taunts as well.

"Scared? I'm just playing around. You seem to be lasting well but how long can you hold up? I'll smash you!"

Valencia once again rushed forward and swung his lightsaber. Sparks kept on flying as the two swords collided. The speed of the defense and attack were hard to keep up with! There were hardly any changes from the beginning of

the battle but their health started to decrease at a rapid pace. Skills started to become mixed with the sword so damage started occurring. But the game was still 50-50! Valencia had stronger sword related skills but Ark was overwhelming with his swordplay itself. Therefore both Ark and Valencia's health fell to 50%.

“W-what is this?”

A baffled exclamation was heard from behind them. The people looking with confused eyes were Slayer, Leon, Melina and Milan.

“What, what the? Why are they hitting each other in a place like this?”

“Slayer-nim, Leon-nim, take care of that robed man! He is trying to blow up the panel supplying energy to the research centre's shield! You have to stop him!”

“Eek? T-this voice is Alan-nim?”

“T-that person fighting over there is Alan-nim? But.....the face is normal!”

“I don't have time to explain in detail! If you don't take care of him then the people inside the research centre will be completely wiped out!”

“Ugh! This bastard, he was just buying time!”

The robed man growled out. Then his red hands once again started creating a hole in the metal sphere.

“T-this guy is doing something?”

“Didn't you hear Alan-nim's words? We have to stop him!”

“Y-yes! I don't understand but let's just go!”

Slayer and Leon instantly ran forward after hearing Melina's angry words.

“We won't let you! Kill them!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Belt and Seth took out their M-60's and started shooting. Blood poured from Slayer and Leon's body as they rushed forward.

.....It was good up to there.

The two of them had been awake for 30 hours! They had no motivation even while being fired upon with a shower of bullets. But the next moment! The situation immediately changed the moment a bullet hit Melina.

“Ack!”

“Ugh! Melina-nim! Blood! Blood!”

“These scums dare hit her!”

“Ohhhh! I'm going to kill you! Let's go Leon! Steel Dash!”

The angry Slayer panted and charged. The bullets couldn't do anything against the thick alloy his shield was made of. Slayer swung his mace and Belt and Seth were forced to put away the machine gun. Then the rays from Leon's rail gun came from the back. Their combat power was no joke once Slayer and Leon fully decided to engage in battle. They were a charge type guardian and a specialist in firearms and they had selected their body coatings based on that. The two of them had always played together so it was like getting set of 2 people for the price of 1. The selected body coating complemented their strengths and weaknesses. Slayer and Leon were like $1+1=3$. Then their power $\times 2$ once Melina joined! A healer was essential to any party so it was natural. Anyway, Melina was a woman who made their combat power climb sharply.

“Ugh! What, what the? These guys.....”

With Melina healing Slayer and the support from Leon and Milan, the situation quickly turned. And when it came to Ark.....

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

‘Dammit, I shouldn't have been so smug!’

He cursed as he rolled away from the hail of bullets. It was when Slayer's group appeared.

"S-surely not....."

Valencia glared at Ark. At that moment Ark slid his blade down Valencia's chest.

"Impact Shot!"

Bullets were fired from his sword handle. This was the double attack possible with his Impact Sword! Valencia never expected that attack and retreated. Ark raised his Impact Sword and laughed.

"Did you see it? Yes, of course you did. Aren't you thankful?"

"You.....you....bastard....."

"You don't have to be so impressed. Soon I will kill you."

Ark stepped towards Valencia. At that moment Valencia's bag opened and a capsule popped out. It spun in the air before forming armour around Valencia. This was the federation's battle suit!

"What? I heard that was seized.....the beam sword to.....did you buy it with the money from prisoners on Beltana? But I also have something like that! Armour armament!"

Armour also wound around Ark's body at that moment. It was the battle suit that looked like a creature rather than a machine. Valencia murmured with a surprised expression.

"The Rama clan's....."

"It is a long explanation. So just die."

If both sides were wearing battle suits then their power should be almost equal! Or so Ark thought. But the next moment small machine guns emerged from both of Valencia's arms. And he had to run away escaping from the

bullets. Valencia's battle suit was specialized in swift assaults. It had the ability to catch up to Ark while he was dodging the bullets.

'However, that guy's health fell to 20% before he wore the battle suit so I can win if I use the shot gun. The problem is time!'

Ark looked at the robed man. The Fire Eagle was meant for close combat. The damage would decrease the further the distance was. Therefore he needed a considerable amount of time to win with such a method. But that guy started to work again with Slayer's appearance and he was already halfway through. In addition, Belt and Seth were also wearing their battle suits so it was more difficult for Slayer and Leon.

'There is no point in defeating Valencia if I can't stop that guy. I have to kill him as soon as possible. To do this I need to use my sword. Then there is only this method!'

Ark raised his head and shouted.

"Binding Sword!"

A black vortex emerged from the end of sword.

-Your attack has hit the target!

<The enemy's movements will be sealed
for 2 seconds!>

The message appeared as soon as the vortex hit Valencia. Binding Sword was the skill to seal the enemy's movements! In fact, this was a skill that hadn't succeeded when he previously tried it. But this time Ark was successful. He had spent 20 hours in the dungeon. There were times when Ark needed to help Slayer without showing his strength. Therefore he used Binding Sword instead of Sonic Sword or Set Bullets Shooting. No, he used it as practice. Thanks to that he now learnt the timing and trick to it. The result was a

success! Valencia was sealed!

“It is finished!”

“You fool!”

Just as Ark was running forward with delight. Valencia raised his head and shouted.

“Gas port open! Target is Ark! Numerous firing of multiple warheads! Go!”

The battle suit around Valencia’s shoulders opened and 20 missiles came flying out. Each battle suit had a special skill attached to it. The special skill for Valencia’s battle suit was a multiple rocket launcher. It didn’t have homing capabilities but the hit rate was close to 100%!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Ark’s body was wrapped in a wave of heat.

“Kukuku, how is it? A trump card is meant to be used at times like this!”

Valencia laughed as he looked at the rising smoke. Ark only had 20% health left. It was because he wanted to buy time until Slayer arrived. Of course, that would be enough if Ark fought directly but he was hit by multiple rockets. The damage would build up and multiple! If it was that much than Ark would be turned into powder. However.....

“Not yet.”

Ark’s voice was heard from the smoke. The smoke cleared and a transparent sphere could be seen around Ark. It was Mind Shield that reduced 40~60% of all damage. As soon as Valencia fired the rockets he had reflexively produced a shield with 300 durability. Therefore he still had 10% health left!

“It is only called a trump card if you’re the last one to use it. 18 Barrage!”

Ark rushed like a bullet as his shield broke and shouted. At that moment the shoulder area of his Hyper Drone emitted steam. And both arms shot forward

at a dazzling speed.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

His fists left sharp marks on Valencia's chest. And 18 marks were engraved!

-The Hyper Drone's mana has been exhausted.

<Hyper Drone will be recalled to its dimension and it can't be summoned for another 10 hours>

The Hyper Drone disappeared. And.....

“Cough!”

A fountain of blood shot up and Valencia collapsed. Ark felt refreshed as he cleaned up the grudge from Beltana. But Ark didn't have time to gloat over Valencia collapsing.

“You gloomy looking guy! Now it is your turn!”

Ark turned towards the robed man and exclaimed.

“That dumb child, Valencia didn't listen to my advice in the end.....”

“Hey, move away from the panel if you don't want to die!”

“Heh, ignorant bastards. Do you think you can interfere with the cause of God?”

“I guess words won't work.”

In fact he knew this from the beginning. Ark grabbed his sword and ran towards the robed man. The man took out his arm that was melting the partition and drew a complicated patten in the air. The next moment there were flames emerging from his eyes, mouth and ears! Any experienced user would sense it in this moment. It was dangerous!

“R-retreat! Everybody back off!”

“Ohh! For the purpose of the Great God!”

The robed man shouted in a voice filled with insanity.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

An explosion shook the area.

Land where the sun sets and sun rises

‘Huhuhu, keep on making noise.’

Bain smiled wickedly. The pioneers in the vicinity were yelling wildly but it wouldn’t change anything. Once again, he was in an unbearable situation until today. He had convinced the Laius company to establish a research centre at Mt. Fargo despite them being sceptical. But he couldn’t find any signs of a lode despite searching.

‘If I can’t achieve any results then I might lose my job!’

Responsibility → Dismissal → Poverty → Homeless → Desperation → Death!

The route for a gloomy life replayed through his head. And suddenly space pirates struck. This was a chance he could take advantage of!

‘So far the project has failed and the company has received huge damages. But this will change if I handle this crisis. Istana never had space pirates of this scale attack before. Of course it would be an issue. And I’m in the centre of this issue! I can gather assets from the pioneers in exchange for my protection. If I do this then I can make up for the project’s failure. Of course I will also make a profit.’

He charged a fee for the pioneers to use the facility. 50 gold per person. There were 150 people so that would be 7,500 gold. When compared to the cost of establishing the research institute, it was an amount that could save him.

‘If I take advantage of this then I won’t be fired from the company!’

Issue → Transfer → Success → Treated well → Family harmony → Happy in his old age.

A route for a happy future rose in his head.

‘Huhuhu, they might make noise but they will be forced to accept in the end.

The pioneers have to pay 50 gold to resurrect at the Fairy. If they pay 50 gold then they don't have to die. The answer is obvious. So don't hold back your money! Pay money to be protected by the research centre! For my promotion!'

While Bain was busy thinking.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A huge amount of fire burst from the rear of the research centre. Bain turned around with surprise and the blood drained from his face. The institute's shield had disappeared along with the explosion.

"S-shield.....!"

"What? That explosion just now?"

"It seems to be an explosion from the research centre.....heok! The shield is gone!"

"The shield is gone? What happened? What's going on?"

"This is serious! If there isn't a shield then we can't stop those guys! We'll be wiped out!"

The people around Bain started chattering noisily. Bain who was surveying the research centre suddenly raised his head.

"W-wait? The panel that supplies the shield with energy is behind the research centre.....then that explosion just now was at the panel? Oh my god! Guards, check where the explosion occurred!"

"This is serious!"

At that moment a group of people ran from the rear of the research centre and shouted. The people came from the rear where the explosion had occurred just now! Bain who summed up the situation in his head suddenly jumped and pointed at them.

“Those guys! They’re the culprits who made the panel blow up!”

“What? Those people?”

The pioneers turned angry eyes towards them. Then the woman in the party exclaimed with an amazed expression.

“What are you saying? We were trying to stop them from blowing up the panel!”

“Shut up! You’re lying! Guards, catch them! They’re clearly part of the space pirates!”

Bain shouted hysterically at the guards who lifted their guns. Then 10 pioneers emerged from the crowd and stopped them.

“Wait a minute! They came from the source of the explosion but it is impossible to conclude that they’re the culprits. Previously we were able to arrive here because of their help. If they didn’t help then a lot of people here would’ve died a long time ago. Why would they help us if they’re part of the space pirates?”

“You moron! That is obvious! It is to enter the research centre!”

“But shouldn’t we hear their explanation first?”

“There’s nothing to hear.”

Then one suspect stepped forward and said.

“It is true that some space pirates were hiding here. Their purpose was to destroy the energy panel supplying the shield. We accidentally became aware of that but failed to stop them. I can show you the scene recorded on the Nymphe. But that isn’t the important thing right now. Those guys gathered in front of the research centre are waiting for a good opportunity after the shield is released. And they will soon launch an attack. If we don’t take immediate measures then we’ll be wiped out.”

“Hah! Don’t make me laugh. Who are you?”

“I just.....”

The man sighed and was about to continue. Then another person emerged from the rear and shouted.

“My Hyung-nim’s name is Ark! He is Beltana’s Hero!”

‘This guy.....’

Ark sighed and shook his head. The person who introduced Ark was Milan. Milan had been ignoring Ark since they started to dig at Mt. Fargo. But Milan’s attitude suddenly changed after he defeated Valencia.

“Hyung-nim defeated Valencia of the armoured platoon.....!”

In fact, Valencia was a separate existence for Milan. He had spent longer on Beltana than Ark so it was natural for him to be fearful of the armoured platoon. Valencia was the leader of the armoured platoon so he was an existence that couldn’t be touched. He thought that Ark who was a prisoner couldn’t be an opponent for Valencia at all. Yet Valencia had died right in front of him. Ark was truly his Hyung-nim!

“Hyung-nim is strong! He didn’t receive the title of Beltana’s Hero by luck!”

-Milan is sending you a look of respect.

<Intimacy +100>

-Milan considers you a Hyung-nim to be proud of.

<Intimacy +100>

Those messages had popped up! This was why Milan proudly introduced Ark. Ark was a Hyung-nim he wanted to brag about the moment he defeated

Milan. Anyway, the pioneers murmured noisily after Milan dropped that bomb.

“Ark? Did he say Ark?”

“Beltana’s Hero that appeared on the federation’s TV a while ago?”

“Didn’t he lead the drafted prisoners to victory on Beltana?”

“That’s right! I remember that face! I clearly saw that face on the federation’s TV!”

However there were some people who received a bigger impact. They were Slayer, Leon and Melina. Their eyes widened as they stared at Ark. He didn’t have a chance to tell them his real name after the panel was blown up.

“Ark the hero of Beltana? Really?” Then his previous face and name.....?”

“I’m sorry. Actually, I met that guy I just defeated when I first arrived here. That guy’s name is Valencia. I knew that guy from Beltana so I sensed he was up to something suspicious.

Ark combined the situation and gave a plausible answer. Well, it was true that he used the Hyde Helmet because of Valencia.

“I’m sorry. Whatever the reason I still tricked you.”

“Talking like that.....”

“It’s nothing. I understand! I can see that it was an important affair.”

Slayer wiped off his angry expression. Melina nodded. Then she grinned at Slayer and Leon.

“These two aren’t narrow minded either. Isn’t that right?”

“.....Of course.” We understand.”

Slayer spoke quickly with a cough. Meanwhile the man with the tattoo on his face approached Ark.

“I am Shein. I thought your clothes were similar but you’re the same person. I’ve been in the Outlands for a while so I hadn’t heard about Beltana’s Hero but I have experience with Ark-nim on the battlefield. Like I said a while ago, my party will follow Ark without comment.”

“I’m Kuma. I’m also with you.”

“My name is Face.”

The pioneers started gathering around him. Once half of them followed him, it was natural for the rest of the pioneers to admit that Ark was the commander. Then one of the pioneers screamed.

“Those guys are coming!”

At the same time, all of the pioneers’ eyes focused on Ark.

“The shield is gone so the research centre isn’t safe anymore. The only obstacle stopping them is the barrier around the institute. However, the barrier is only 1 metre thick so a few RPG attacks will make it collapse. If they rush in then the odds aren’t in our favour.”

“Is there no other way?”

“Yes, here.....”

“You mean.....?”

“We have to endure for one day. If we move to this place then it is possible.”

Ark raised his head and looked at the top of Mt. Fargo as he answered. Ark had been thinking of ways to deal with this situation since the explosion. Then a 200 metre basin at the top of this mountain popped into Ark’s head. Mt. Fargo was a dormant volcano so it was natural for a basin to form.

“You might already know this but Mt. Fargo had a basin. It is a concave shape with rocks around the perimeter. If we enter the basin then we can take advantage of this rock wall. The mountain is like a natural wall so the RPGs

won't be a problem. If we occupy the top and shoot downwards then we'll also get the terrain bonus."

"When did you survey the terrain.....?"

"I investigate the terrain everywhere I need to fight."

He actually did this while digging around Mt. Fargo. But an impressed light spread in the eyes of the pioneers. Then Bain who was listening ran towards them and shouted.

"What, what the? You're leaving the research centre? Don't make me laugh! This bastard, do you know how much it took to make this centre? You can't go! You have to protect this place even if it means your death!"

"Ha! He's gone crazy."

"The reason we headed to his place was because of the shield. Not to mention he tried to rip us off to pay a fee."

"Now he wants us to protect him? Let's leave."

"T-that.....no! Don't go! If you leave the research centre then I'll be ruined!"

Bain yelled but the pioneers didn't even look at him. Shein turned back to Ark and said.

"I understand what you're saying. But those guys are already advancing towards the research centre. It won't be easy to reach the top while pursued by them. There are also many non-combatants."

"I have an idea."

Ark's eyes stared at Bain's guards.

"Does the research centre have any vehicles?"

"There are 3 mountain land cruisers in the shed."

"Land cruisers? No! That is the private property of Laius!"

“A maximum of 20 people can board 1.”

Even his guards were ignoring Bain.

“That’s good. Then please have all non-combatants like merchants and research centre staff board them. The heavy armoured pioneers as well. All pioneers wearing light armour like me will move on foot. But before that.....”

Ark looked at the herd of frogs approaching and laughed.

“It is time.”

Someone said from among the frogs. The man wearing a black robe stared at the research centre with glossy eyes. Just before the shield was released, a red light had exploded from the centre. He knew the identity of the light. Sacrifice. The priest class could turn their bodies into bombs to destroy their enemies. In other words, the brother who infiltrated was dead. But his eyes had no regrets.

“Hyung has returned to the Great God. This is the will of the true God. All followers, go! Pay back the sacrifice of your Hyung! For the glory of the Great God!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

The Kero clan fired their guns and ran towards the research centre. A shower of bullets was fired at the research centre. As expected, the turrets around the research centre started to counterattack. It was a long range turret that was devastating along with the protection of the shield.

Pushu! Pushu! Pushu! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A few RPGs hit it directly and the turret was turned into mechanical parts. The Kero quickly disposed of the turrets and entered the research centre. The

man who was watching the situation warmly suddenly narrowed his eyes.

‘Something.....?’

A reaction couldn’t be felt. The Kero clan didn’t encounter any resistance from the enemy. The Kero fired their guns and advanced but it felt like the research centre wasn’t retaliating apart from the turrets. It was like there was no one there. The man suddenly raised his head.

“Wait a minute! No! Stop!”

The moment the man was screaming!

Kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang, kwa kwang!

Massive amounts of flames shot out from the barrier the Kero clan stepped over. At the same time, 300 Kero that were jumping over the barrier turned into ash. On the other side of the fire, 3 land cruisers and dozens of people were sneaking away.

“W-we were deceived! Those guys.....”

‘Success!’

Ark grinned as he saw the research centre circled by flames. 200 Kero had been turned to ash in an instant! Naturally Ark was the cause. The pioneers had scattered C-6 around the barrier before they sneaked away.

“How much is that.....”

Bain was on the verge of crying. The barrier had exploded but it wasn’t just a barrier. Before the energy panel was blown up, the barrier was the place that deployed the shield. Naturally it would be more expensive than a normal barrier. Now it had flown away.

“I’m screwed! Demotion! Dismissal! Suicide!”

Bain completely lost all his spirit. And in front of Ark.....

-Your level has risen!

-Your level has risen!

The messages rose with a cheerful melody. Ark was currently the commander of 150 pioneers. He also spearheaded the strategy to use explosives to kill the Kero so he got a lot of experience.

“Oh, I gained 2 levels!”

“Jackpot!”

The engineers next to him cheered. However Ark’s expression didn’t change.

‘There is no meaning in gaining experience if I don’t survive!’

He had experienced it in the severe -50 weather on Beltana. The stats increasing were only slightly helpful in battle. If they were killed before registering with the Fairy then it would go back to 0. That’s why experience on the battlefield meant nothing. The important thing was to survive until the end. Naturally the reason he blew up the barrier wasn’t to gain experience. It was to gain time to retreat to the top!

‘They’re gathered in front of the research centre so it will be difficult if they chase us immediately.....’

It was different from sealing the entrance of a dungeon. Once the pioneers started climbing the mountain, the Kero clan would flock from all over the place.

“There is no need to panic! The slope is made with gravel! They have no time to aim so their hit rate would fall terribly! Focus more on climbing the mountain than on counterattacking!”

Ark saw a user with a RPG and approached him.

“Kuma-nim, we have to be most careful about the armoured troops. There is a risk of RPGs hitting the land cruiser. So we need to aim at the heavy warriors before they aim at the land cruiser!”

“Understood!”

“And Leon-nim!”

Ark turned towards Leon.

“While our heavy weapons unit is countering them, I want you guys to snipe them. Leon-nim should gather the snipers and prepare to shoot at any time! Please cover us while we’re running!”

Ark distributed the roles. In a battlefield with bullets and artillery, he couldn’t afford to give orders once the confusing fight began. Now was the only chance to properly assign roles to the soldiers. This was the wonderful thing about pioneers. By default they were high levelled. They were also used to hunting in a party.

“RPG to our 3 o’clock! Two snipers are near them!”

The pioneers responded instantly after Kuma and Leon designated the targets. Even the low levelled pioneers here were at least level 60. Therefore their aim and hit rate couldn’t be compared. In a gunfight this difference was tremendous. And the pioneers had specific targets unlike the Kero clan that were shooting wildly.

The Kero’s heavy troopers and snipers kept on falling. However, numbers couldn’t be ignored on a battlefield.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Bullets fired down everywhere! The hit rate was low but it was a number that couldn’t be ignored.

“Ugh! Dammit, I was hit in the leg!”

In the rear a pioneer fell to the ground while holding his leg. This was Ark's role!

"Melina-nim!"

Ark took out the air board and flew on it with his left arm around Melina's waist. The weight was heavier on one side so the air board shook uneasily but he had flown on this air board for a month. Ark maintained his balance and flew towards the injured pioneer. He interrupted the bullets with Bhurad's shield and said to Melina.

"Conserve your mana. Just do what is necessary."

"Yes, Stitch Wound!"

Melina used her skill while dangling from Ark's arm. The pioneer with the injured leg stood up with a thrilled expression and said.

"Thank you Ark-nim!"

"Give your thanks to Melina-nim. And I'm sorry but she has to conserve her mana to save others so she can't heal your health. If you're worried then join the main body."

"I understand! This much is enough!"

The pioneer saluted and replied. Ark nodded and flew towards another injured person.

-Proof of Faith: Rescue your colleagues (178/200)

Meanwhile the completion of his quest condition steadily increased. But his eyes already didn't notice the message.

'It will take the Laius guards at least one day to get here.....'

Right now it had only been 2 hours. They still needed to hang on for at least 22 hours. He couldn't lose even 1 pioneer.

"Ugh!"

“Ark-nim, you’ve been shot in the side.....!”

“I’m okay! Don’t waste your mana on me! Save it for pioneers who have their movement restricted!”

Bbok bbok bbok bbok! Bbok bbok bbok bbok!

He used the Charenjok’s token to heal himself! However it was impossible to cover all the pioneers with just Ark and Melina. The difference between the soldiers’ equipment and speed showed once they started climbing the mountain. Once the Kero attacking the research centre started to catch up, the pioneers in the rear started falling one by one. Ark felt his heart burn every time he saw a pioneer die. The hectic chase continued for 30 minutes.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepepepeng!

The Kero started being hit by bullets fired from the top. The land cruisers had arrived at the top and were providing cover fire for the pioneers.

“Just a little more power! It is right in front of us!”

Ark shouted as he flew on the air board. After 10 more minutes, all the survivors were finally able to reach the top. Ark jumped down from the air board and gathered the leaders of each unit.

“You suffered a lot. But now comes the tough part. The Laius guards won’t arrive for another 20 hours. The space pirates are probably aware of this fact. Their purpose is to wipe us out before help can arrive. Now there is only one thing we can believe in.”

“Only one thing we can believe in?”

“Those guys are raiding this place for a reason. In order to achieve that purpose, those guys must stop killing us a few hours before the guards arrive. I said 20 hours but the time is actually less than that.”

“In other words, those guys have to rush.”

Ark nodded and replied.

“That’s correct. We’re currently occupying a favourable terrain. If we use the rocks then we can neutralize the enemy snipers and troopers. On the other hand, we won’t have a problem using sniping or heavy weapons. The terrain bonus will also be applied so our damage will increase. If they’re rushing then we have some chances of succeeding.”

“I understand what you’re saying.”

However the faces around him were still dark.

‘.....They sensed it as well.’

He spoke hopefully but raising morale was a serious problem. The Laius guards were arriving in 20 hours but there was a crucial reason why it would be tough to endure. They were experienced users so they knew what the problem was. The problem would occur after 10 hours. Until then the situation went like Ark predicted. Approximately 130 people arrived at the top and he placed the pioneers around the perimeter. And they would shoot at any Kero running up!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepepepeng!

It was a one-sided battle. The pioneers could hide behind the rocks so they had a tactical advantage over the Kero. Thousands of Kero covered Mt. Fargo but numbers were insignificant in a situation like this. From the pioneers viewpoint they were half water and half meat! The Kero tumbled and shot out blood as they were hit by the bullets.

-Your level has
risen!

The pioneers constantly had cross marks on top of their heads. But the gunfire gradually decreased once 10 hours passed. It wasn’t because the Kero’s attacks had slowed down.

‘The time has come!’

Ark murmured as he bit his lips.

‘I’d pushed them this far.....’

The pioneers ignorantly thought they were winning but Ark knew differently. In this situation the pioneers were overwhelming! So the Kero should attack more carefully. But the Kero were frogs so they were stupid. They didn’t care about the dying bodies and just continued moving forward. The result was.....

“I’ve run out of bullets!”

“My RPG shells have finished!”

This was exactly what Ark was concerned about. They didn’t have an infinite supply of ammunition. Of course pioneers used firearms so they always collected bullets. And they had loaded the land cruisers with supplies when they retreated from the research centre. However, 130 people were shooting for 10 hours so it was natural for bullets to run out.

‘There is only one way left!’

It was to fight in close combat. But shooting enemies from a distance and close combat was completely different. It would be impossible to hold up when the mountain was covered in Kero.

But it was the end if they gave up!

“Everybody please pay attention!”

Ark shouted from the centre. The pioneers at the edges looked at him.

“You’ve fought well so far. Unfortunately there aren’t any bullets remaining. Soon some of us will start falling. The only way we can resist is in close combat. Of course it will be a tough fight. We might be wiped out before the guards arrive. No, to be honest the chances are very high. I’m sorry for everyone who believed in me and came here. However I’m not going to give up until the end. So believe in me and follow until the end!”

“The bullets have run out?”

“Damn, then didn’t we make a mistake?”

“There is no way. How long did we endure for.....?”

The pioneers murmured among each other after Ark’s words. At that time the NPCs and Bain came rushing towards Ark.

“Close combat? Win in a close combat situation? You stupid brat! Look at their numbers! It will be impossible for us to hold up until the guards arrive! Ah! I made a mistake! I’m not a pioneer like you! I only have one life! You have to protect me! You! I came here because of you so you have to take responsibility!”

“Shut up, you idiot!”

A middle aged man in work clothes snapped at Bain. He was the president of Hammer Industries that Ark first met in town.

“It was inevitable. And your instructions weren’t wrong. Have confidence. Even if we’re completely wiped out, we were only able to last this long thanks to you.”

“But it is the same if we die! We suffered for no reason! Because of him!”

Bain raised his head and shouted angrily. Then Melina glared at him and snapped.

“What are you saying? Do you know how hard Ark-nim worked to save everyone?”

“Shut up! I can say whatever I want to stupid pioneers!”

“What did you just say?”

Then Leon grabbed Bain’s collar and said.

“This might be a bad result but this is the first time the rail gun has seen so much excitement since starting Galaxian. If I didn’t know Ark-nim then I

would already be dead. I thought it was wondering that Ark-nim was Beltana's Hero but he didn't obtain that title for nothing."

Then Slayer took out his mace and exclaimed.

"Hey! Isn't everybody else the same?"

"Indeed. So far it was a great stand."

"Yes, we might be throwing away a bit of experience but let's see this through to the end. Do you know? Maybe a miracle might happen?"

"We will fight together with Ark until the end!"

"Yes, let's go! Ohhhhh!"

The pioneers lifted their weapons and cried out. Milan who had been looking around with a worried expression said.

"Hyung-nim, I'm proud you're my Hyung-nim! I will look forward to the next time I see Hyung-nim!"

"Huk huk huk, these assholes! This is why I hate pioneers....."

One NPC was sitting on the ground and crying. Anyway, fortunately their morale had increased!

"A crowd of those guys are coming!"

A pioneer suddenly cried out. The same report simultaneously came from different directions. The Kero noticed that the shooting had stopped and pushed forward.

"Having a sunset in the background for the last battle.....good."

Slayer said with a smile. Then Leon laughed and said on the other side.

"You're on that end. Having the sun set during a battle is just gloomy. This is sunrise. We're battling with the rising sun. Doesn't that give you more hope?"

“Sheesh, having a sunset and sunrise at the same time. This planet really isn’t normal.”

Ark raised his head as he noticed Slayer’s words. He saw that the two of them were standing on different sides.

‘Sunrise and sunset at the same time?’

Once again, Istana had two suns. Each moved at a different orbit so it was possible to have a sunrise and sunset at the same time. Just like Slayer and Leon’s words, one side of Mt. Fargo was having a sunset while the sun was rising on the other side. It was a curious phenomenon created by the rocks surrounding the summit. The phrase written on the stone slab suddenly entered Ark’s mind.

–The place where the sun sets and the sun rises!

Ark didn’t know the exact meaning of that phrase until now. When he looked at the library, he thought the place was Mt. Fargo.

‘But that didn’t simply point to Mt. Fargo. It needed the right place! It referred to a place on the mountain where the sun set and rose at the same time! Here! This is the place I’m looking for!’

It was followed by this phrase.

You will need to prove your qualifications. But you have to reach that place.

‘This is the place where the sun sets and rises at the same time! And it states that only a descendant of the Murat can reach it. In other words, proving my qualifications means proving I’m a descendant of the Murat. This is like the meteorite that I found in Charem!’

It was the Murat’s Shire!

‘I might be able to get away from this situation!’

Ark’s eyes flashed. If Ark was correct then the Shire could open the door to the ruins. And this was the top so the door must be underneath his foot. It

meant the ruins were somewhere in the interior of Mt. Fargo! Laius' guards would arrive in 10 hours. However, the inside of the mountain was like a bomb shelter so they could endure for that long.

'The fact that other users will know about the ruins is weighing on my mind.....'

If Ark didn't open the ruins then he was bound to die. And there was the person manipulating the Kero behind the scenes. Valencia wouldn't be able to control the Kero no matter how corrupt he was. Actually, the person who gave orders to Valencia was different to the one leading the Kero. The man controlling Valencia had blown himself up! Ark had no room to think about it at the time but the technique he used was similar to Ark's Rune Carving.

'If he really used seals then they might be after the Murat ruins.'

There was no guarantee the Murat relics would be there if he returned. Ark thought up to there.

Ka ka ka ka! Ka ka ka ka! Ka ka ka ka!

He heard the sound of iron on the side of the sunset. 100 Kero was gathered with their swords. It wasn't just these guys. Another group! Another one! Another!

'I can't hesitate!'

"Come out, Shire! Rune Carving!"

A blue light appeared at Ark's fingertips.

"Now it's over."

The robed man looked up the mountain and smiled. Hundreds of Kero had reached the summit. The circumstances were clear. They ran out of bullets so they would die soon. And his wish would come true.

“This is the will of God!”

Then a blue light suddenly appeared at the mountain’s summit. Confusion spread on the man’s face.

“T-that light is....w-why....n-no! Stop! All followers! Stop that light! No, kill! The person producing the light! They are God’s enemy! Kill them! Kill!”

At the same time the light exploded into the sky.

‘W-what is this?’

Ark became baffled. He experienced all sorts of mysterious things when playing a virtual reality game. Therefore he wouldn’t be surprised if the volcano exploded or a devil appeared. But he was really upset this time. Ark thought doors to the ruins would appear when he called the Shire. And a light pillar suddenly shot up from the ground. The light pillar wrapped around him like chains and he couldn’t move. And his body started turning into particles and scattering.

‘Oh my god! Was my judgement wrong?’

Ark thought he had operated a trap. When he thought about it, there was always the option of a trap when the Murat were involved. There was the infinite rooms that all connected in the pyramid on Beltana and on Charem there was an artefact that created Sufferers. If he looked at the pattern then it was likely that this place also had a trap. The trap was to destroy ignorant invaders!

‘I’m dead! Dammit, I can’t die like this!’

Ark grabbed his head and started screaming. No, he wanted to. However he couldn’t even lift a finger because of the light. He was frozen as he was about

to carve a rune. Fortunately his stance looked cool but.....he was still being disassembled.

“H-Hyung-nim!”

“What is going on?”

Milan and the other pioneers were upset at the sudden situation. Then the pillar of light disappeared.

“N-no! Hyung-nim is gone! He was completely burnt!”

Milan ran to where the light pillar was and stuttered tearfully. Only a black mark was left on the ground.

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

Then Mt. Fargo started making a rumbling sound and shaking.

Elim!

‘This is.....?’

Ark held his breath and looked around. His body was decomposed by the light so Ark naturally thought he was dead. Then in the next moment, Ark had appeared in an unexpected place. It was a dark space but he could differentiate between some things thanks to his Clairvoyance ability. It was a spacious rectangular space. The room was 10 metres and lined with stone statues. He couldn’t remember the exact name but the statues were something he often saw in Egyptian related documentaries!

‘If it is Egyptian civilization then it must be the Murat! Then this place is the Murat ruins in Mt. Fargo? Did I really enter the ruins? Then the light decomposition didn’t mean I died?’

He was glad to be alive but he couldn’t be assured. There was no guarantee this room wasn’t a trap like the pyramid. Ark took one step and looked around carefully.

Tututudung!

There was the abrupt sound of drumbeats.

‘Hik! What, what the? What’s going to happen now?’

Ark became tense and lifted his sword. Then an information window appeared in front of him.

-Proof of Eligibility: Finding a sanctuary (1/1)

-All the conditions for <Proof of Qualification> have been met.

<The data sealed by the quest has been unlocked>

‘Eh? What is this? Proof of Qualification?’

Ark looked at the information window with confusion. The <Proof of Qualification> was the occupation quest he received from the memory chip inside the Charenjok’s toy. There were four conditions required to fulfil this quest. Proof of Courage, Proof of Faith, Proof of Destiny and Proof of Eligibility. He had completed the Proof of Destiny as soon as he found the logbooks. As for the Proof of Courage that required him to defeat 100 monsters higher levelled than him, that was taken care of by killing the Thanatos in Mt. Fargo for 20 hours! He had completed the Proof of Faith by rescuing 200 pioneers a short time ago! The problem was the proof of Eligibility.

‘How can I find a sanctuary? Where the hell am I supposed to go? Does that mean visiting a Cathedral in a city?’

At first he thought it was simple. However he visited the Cathedral before leaving Nabe and there were no changes. Yet the Proof of Eligibility was completed the moment he entered the Murat ruins. An ‘!’ appeared in Ark’s head as he confirmed the information.

‘I see. The Cathedrals on Istana represent the human’s religion. But the pioneer that hid the data in the toy might not be human. Furthermore, he was a pioneer from a very long time ago. It is possible that humanity’s religions didn’t exist back then. In that case, the quest condition is finding an alien sanctuary!’

That was the Murat ruins right here. Then another message window floated in front of Ark.

-
Xana
x

“Xanax?”

Ark tilted his head to one side and muttered.

Woong woong woong woong. Woong woong woong woong. Woong woong woong woong.

There was a mechanical sound and the space brightened. The light was coming from a sphere in the middle.

“W-what is this? Is it a trap like I expected? Eh? A trap?”

Ark flinched and took a few steps back.

–Hrmm.....

A low voice was heard from the sphere of light. Ark became tense as the light scanned him.

–I thought this existence was lost....that the heir who appeared after hundreds of years is human....I’m surprised. The undeveloped humans roasting meat on the fringe of the galaxy has grown enough to be the heir? Although the galaxy did go through a great crisis....By the way, Xanax..... that nostalgic name.

He didn’t know what was going on but there didn’t seem to be a threat. But he was completely alone here.

“That.....”

–Ah! Yes, human.

Now the sphere of light started to show an interest in Ark.

–I didn’t ask for your name yet. What is your name?

“I am Ark.”

–It is amazing that the heir is human but I suppose the era has changed. Good, Ark. It must’ve been tough getting here. You’re human but the fact that you entered here is proof of the Murat’s lineage. Needless to say, you will become Xanax’s successor. Now the heir has appeared after hundreds of years. Soon we will begin the ceremony. Ark, kneel down in front of the great prophets and pay your respects.

“W-wait a minute!”

Ark stuttered with a puzzled expression. He was confused by everything. Ark thought this place was the Murat ruins. But there was something strange. There were the stone statues but Ark didn’t see any Murat items like the pyramid containing the Shire. That wasn’t the only confusing thing. The word ‘Xanax’ had appeared when he completed the <Proof of Qualification> quest. Yet the sphere of light that appeared had mentioned the name Xanax? Furthermore, it said something about an heir? The situation was so ambiguous that he had no idea what was going on. Ark pondered all these questions before asking.

“Is this place the ruins of the Murat?”

–What? Did you come here without knowing where this was?

The sphere of light turned red with anger. However it returned to its original colour after a moment.

–No, it is natural for you to think that. There hasn’t been an heir for a long time so you wouldn’t know any information related to succession. And you’re from the undeveloped human tribe. Well it can’t be helped. Okay. I’ll explain it.

The sphere of light spoke in a patronizing tone. And it burst into explanation mode.

–A long time ago, four great species existed in Galaxian. They each

controlled a different solar system and we called the Murat, Indus, Potamia and Oritious. At the time there were many undeveloped species and they generously bestowed their science and civilization to numerous species in the galaxy.

But they were races that didn't dominate. They had an implicit promise between them to not directly engage in any other species. They reigned but didn't rule. But then a problem occurred. The species that had their eyes opened to technology started developing hazardous weapons like nuclear bombs. If they continued then the galaxy would be senselessly destroyed. But if the four races engaged directly then there was a risk that it would cause even more dissention.

-After worrying about it, a great prophet of the four races came to one conclusion. There needed to be limits on their direct involvement. That was the Elim.

“Elim? Weren't the Elim the original natives that lived on Istana?”

Ark asked after remembering the information from Nabe's library.

-Oh, the humans know this much?

The light sphere shone with interest.

-It is a little different but that isn't entirely wrong. The Elim were the proxy of the four races who executed their will. The four species each choose 1 person with excellent abilities to act on their behalf. So you weren't entirely wrong. However, the true faces of the Elim were warriors. The four races passed on their power to the Elim. The four races also gave them 'Divine Artefacts.'

The Divine Artefacts were made with the essence of the four races' power and science. This made the Elim the strongest warriors in the galaxy and they successfully managed to settle the feud between several species.

-Peace continued for a long time after that. At least before the Karma

showed up.

“Karma? What is that?”

-I don't know what they are. Or even what their purpose was. They came from the outer reaches of space that no species had reached yet. Confusion spread in the galaxy at their appearance and many alien species were wiped out. It lasted for 50 years. At that time, the four races joined hands with the various races of the galaxy to take care of the Karma. The Elim were the ones that played the biggest role in this war. The Elim.....

The statement seemed to indicate that something terrible would follow.

“Is that the crisis you mentioned a short time ago?”

–No, the large crisis took place after that.

The sphere of light sighed.

The war with the Karma moved from the boundaries of the universe to the centre. But the four faces who participated in the war had some of their civilizations destroyed. That was the start of all the problems.....

The blow that the four races received became the seeds of another conflict. They needed a large amount of resources to repair the damage. The Potamia and Oritious argued that they needed to requisition the planet's species to manage its resources. Meanwhile the Murat and Indus just commandeered the resources from the planets where they bestowed their civilization on hundreds of years ago. The Potamia and Oritious against the Murat and Indus. The four races were divided into two camps while the alien species that followed them were also divided into two camps. Finally the seeds of conflict became a war.

-It was different from the Karma's invasion. In addition, the galaxy that was the battlefield wasn't simply divided in half. The four species were the main axis with the power to destroy the galaxy. The damage couldn't be compared to the Karma's invasion. No, it was just after the Karma's invasion so the

damage was even worse. Everybody knew it. There would be no end to the ruin. But it couldn't be stopped. Finally victory or defeat was decided.

The ones that put an end to it were the Elim. The Elim that represented the four races fought each other. And the one that survived in the end was the Murat's Elim!

-The Murat who were in charge of 10 species chose a Rama born with exceptional talent to become the ultimate Elim warrior. His name was Xanax.

“.....Eh?”

Ark who had been listening blankly suddenly looked surprised. Xanax was the name he learnt after completing the <Proof of Qualification> quest. Then the person who stashed the data in the toy airplane was the Murat's Elim? He was confused about how everything connected. But that wasn't what caused Ark's surprise. Ark had obtained the Rama's language from the data. He was surprised that the Rama were a part of the Murat. Ark had seen the video from the pyramid on Beltana. Weren't the Rama the ones who attacked the Murat city? The light sphere soon explained the scene Ark saw in the video.

-That's the reason Xanax hid himself.

“Hid himself?”

-The Murat survived the war until the end but the blow they received was serious. Then the Murat were betrayed by the Rama. It occurred while Xanax was travelling to other planets to help after the war. It was all finished by the time Xanax came back. The Murat had exhausted all their power stopping the Galaxy War and were finally wiped out by the Rama. Xanax was furious. However the Rama were his species. Xanax was boiling with anger and eventually hid himself.

Ark now understood the contents of the logbook. The logbook had stated something about a betrayal. He meant the Murat had been betrayed by a species they protected.

-However Xanax didn't just give up. They might've been destroyed but the four species were hundreds of years more advanced than other species. Xanax didn't want their civilization in the hands of the warlike Rama. In addition, the survivors of the Galaxy war had questions about where Xanax was. The Murat had been wiped out while the hidden Xanax started to look for answers to his questions. And he finally found the truth. No, he said that he reached the truth.

"Then he came here?"

-Of course!

The light sphere pulsed strongly.

-This is the holy place where the Murat's Elim was appointed by the Khafra, the natives of Istana after finishing their training. Hundreds of the Murat's Elim had inherited the teachings of the prophet in this location. This is the Holy Land of the Elim. This is where all the knowledge of the Elim sleeps.

"The Murat's Elim.....!"

-The Murat might've been betrayed and destroyed but Xanax was proud of the fact that he was the Murat's Elim. And he felt responsible as the last Elim. The Elim might have no meaning with the four races destroyed but he didn't want the Elim to disappear. Therefore Xanax made me a promise after he came here.

The light sphere looked at Ark for some reason and continued.

-Someone would eventually visit me. They will be someone who gives his hand to the weakest species in the galaxy, who doesn't show fear at unlocking the truth and who has the power not to back down from a strong enemy. And that person should share a destiny with Xanax and the Murat.

The strange situation then combined together in Ark's head. He received the quest in the first place from the Charenjok's toy. The person who helped the weakest species would receive the toy as a sign of the Charenjok's gratitude.

And playing with the toy meant the data would be discovered. Not showing fear for the truth meant releasing the lock with hacking. And the destiny mentioned was the Shire he acquired from Beltana! That was the conditions that Xanax required. And Ark met all the conditions of the <Proof of Qualification> quest. In other words.....

–Xanax said before leaving this place. He said that the person who comes here will be equipped with all of that. That person will be qualified to inherit the name of the Elim. Now I’ll say this. I am the ‘memories of an Elim,’ an Elim who watch the history of the Khafra from the first Elim. I’m asking for the head of the Elim committed to true peace. The human warrior Ark, do you accept the fate of the Elim?

-You have received an offer of an occupation from the Elim’s Memory.

If you accept then you will gain the experience and knowledge of the Murat’s Elim. At the same time, you will receive the special occupation ‘Elim’s Heir’ if you accept.

Do you accept?

This was the meaning of having the qualifications to be an Elim! So far Ark had a few chances to receive an occupation. However it was the ‘Scavenger’ that picked up trash or the ‘Private’ that was following Marquis Martin around. This occupation didn’t have those limitations. And the Elim’s Heir would be given the enormous power of the four species! Of course, the Murat’s Elim had disappeared a long time ago. But they had left behind ruins. In fact, Ark had ended up here because he was searching for ruins. The result was connected to his occupation quest but Ark’s goal was to collect the Murat artefacts! This occupation was related to the Murat. There was no reason for him to hesitate.

“I accept!”

Ark kneeled down and replied powerfully.

–Good Ark! You are authorized to become Elim’s Heir according to Xanax’s will.

The light sphere shouted excitedly. Then rays of light emerged from the eyes of the statues and wound around Ark. At the same time an information window appeared.

Character Information Window			
Name	Ark (R-02788)	Level	85
Species	Human	Occupation	Elim’s Heir
Fame	5,820	Adventure	720
Mana	75+250		
Health	1,950 (+115)+500	Mental Power	1,050 (+75)+250
Strength	190(+33)+20	Agility	265+30
Stamina	355(+23)+20	Wisdom	20(+5)+20
Intelligence	170(+15)+20	Luck	35+20
* Title			
Cleaning Foreman (Agility + 3)			
Ignorant Destroyer (Wisdom -10, Strength +7, Stamina +7)			
Beltana’s Hero (Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence, Luck +3)			

Mediator (Wisdom, Intelligence +15)

* Contribution: Galactic Federation 6,850, Aschulat 500

* Affiliation: Dark Eden (CEO)

*Body Coating: Survivor

- + Environmental adaptation increases by 50% due to the Survivor coating.
- + The Survivor coating reduces the drop rate of Satiety by 30%.
- + The Survivor coating will reduce fall damage by 50%.
- +The 'Clairvoyance' effect of the Survivor coating is applied.

-A new skill (Occupation Restricted ☆☆☆) has been learnt.

Khafra fencing (User, Active): the swordplay that the Elim learnt from the Khafra and completed after decades of training. Khafra Fencing is a simple yet highly utilized method of swordplay with 9 parts. The Elim used Khafra Fencing for several centuries and it had been steadily handed down until the final Elim, Xanax.

-1st style <Defense Break Lv.1> : Technique to break an enemy's defense stance. <Force: 100>

-2nd style <Shield Emission Lv.1> : Technique to blow up a shield into small pieces to damage the enemy. <Force: 150>

-3rd style <Galaxy Sword Lv. 1> : A technique that creates an illusion of

numerous swords to attack the enemy. <Force: 250>

-A new skill (Occupation Restricted ☆☆☆) has been learnt.

Elim's Heart Force (User, Passive): an Elim someone that the Murat picks from numerous species to pass down their traditions to. Different species use mana or mental power so there were some technical difficulties in regards to the skills. After several years of meditation, the Khafra developed a power beyond mana and mental power called Force. This skill can change mana or mental power into Force to use the skill. If you train steadily then you can switch between mana, mental power and force.

<Convert mana or mental power into Force through meditation>

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

In the southern desert of Istana. One thick container truck was moving through the heat raising sand. It was the container truck of the mercenary group Silver Hand. Clem who was sitting on the truck sprayed water on his red face and said.

“Hey, how many kilometres left?”

“We’ve just travelled 30 km.”

The attack leader Pedro said.

“30 kilometres.....there is still quite a bit to go.”

“What about them? It looks like they might die.”

“This isn’t enough to kill them. It also isn’t a big deal if they die. Because those guys are pioneers.”

Clem smiled and looked at the group in the back of the truck. The 10 people

collapsed on the back of the truck with their long tongues hanging out were Ark's Royal Guards.

"But if they were able to survive 30 km in the desert then they've somehow passed. Recently they've also been doing pretty well in training. The difference compared to when they first joined the Silver Hand is tremendous."

"Of course. Because they're doing this for their leader."

"They're strong thanks to that."

"They became strong. Because they would die if they didn't become strong."

"Is there such a thing? It would be annoying if they died just like that."

The Royal Guards were sold to the Silver Hand in order to collect the company establishment fund. For the last month, the Royal Guards had stood on the crossroad between life and death every day. It was Clem and Pedro's training method. They purposefully dropped a lion cub down the cliff in order to raise a child. But that had a limit. They couldn't drop a lion cub down every day. However, Clem and Pedro threw the Royal Guards down a cliff on a daily basis. This wasn't a metaphor.

They really were dropped off cliffs. If they climbed up within the time limit then they could have a short break and eat some rice. But if they didn't come up within the time limit then they would starve to death. This was just a very small example. That was the inhuman, alien training style. It was also like that now. They had to run along the truck in 50 degrees Celsius without a sip of water for 30 km.

'I will do it! Everything is for Hyung-nim!'

The Royal Guards grinded their teeth together as they listened to Clem and Pedro laughing. But the Royal Guards had no idea yet. The person who thought of this training and gave it to the Silver Hand was in fact Ark! Well, the Royal Guards were ignorant about where the radical training program

came from but they definitely became stronger.

‘We have to live! Live and return!’

They also became mentally stronger!

“Now they’ve repaid the deposit given to Ark and they will soon reach the final stage of the training program.”

“How unfortunate.”

Pedro clicked his tongue and muttered.

Roaaaaar!

There was an abrupt roaring sound as an airship appeared from the sandstorm. Its wings were clearly stamped with the mark of the federation.

‘Huhuhu, what kind of luck is this?’

Ark laughed as he looked at the lightsaber in his hand. It was a 1 metre blue ray emerging from a 20 cm rod.

-Heir’s Sword (Unique)

Item Type: Long Sword Wearer Restriction: Elim’s Heir

Attack: 65~70 Durability: 100/100

A lightsaber received from the Khafra when the Murat’s Elim would be selected. The students practiced with this sword before they could receive the Elim designation.

Therefore it is a tradition for the previous Elim to pass this onto the new students. Although the sword is used for training students, the Murat has a more advanced civilization so the lightsaber they produced has a better

performance than those created by other species.

<Strength +20, Agility +20, Attack Speed +10%>

* Special Option (Force Balance): When holding this sword and meditating than the achievement rate of Elim's Heart Force will rise by 50%. In addition, the Force Recovery Rate will increase by 30%.

He received the Heir's Sword after changing occupation. Just the attack power made it the standard of a level 100 magic sword! The special option also increased attack speed by 10% so the Heir's Sword was dedicated to attack. The more amazing thing was that this lightsaber was created for the students. The light sphere, Elim's Memory kept on explaining.

–You were led here by the will of the last Elim Xanax and became the Elim's Heir. But that doesn't mean you're a true Elim yet. You need two things to become a true Elim. I'm only the teacher who passed on the beginnings of Khafra Fencing to you. You will need to learn the remaining 6 style as well as the Divine Artefacts. And the last Elim Xanax is the one who has all of them. But Xanax didn't leave them in this place.

Of course he definitely left them behind. Do you understand?

You have to find the 6 remaining styles of Khafra Fencing and the 5 Divine Artefacts. That is the condition to change to an Elim.

The item to change to a higher ranked occupation wouldn't be found in a beginner area like this. It wasn't surprising because of the game system but the NPC couldn't say 'This is a game!'

–Xanax probably has his own method to teach you directly. It is probably his intention for you to learn what it means to be an Elim while following his path. That is the only plausible fact.

Motivation rose inside Ark. The Elim possessed the most outstanding talent

from the alien species serving the Murat! It was an occupation worth billions of dollars! The Murat even made 5 Divine Artefacts for the Elim. The problem was that Xanax had disappeared with them hundreds of years ago.....

-The seal on the logbook's 3rd page has been released.

He received the message after changing occupations.

‘Now there is no doubt that the owner of this logbook is Xanax. The 3rd page is probably talking about the Elim. Xanax was unable to directly select his student so he needed to find somewhere with the conditions he required. The 3rd page might say something about where to find the Divine Artefacts and remaining skills.’

However Ark didn't check the logbook. The situation had proceeded very suddenly so he had forgotten about something.

“Did anybody other than me come here?”

–*That is impossible now.*

“Now?”

–*Originally this was the Elim's Holy Land. Only the Elim and their successor could come in. But Xanax changed that when he came back here. It was to allow the person who would become Elim's Heir to enter. Therefore I followed Xanax's will and opened the door for the heir. You were able to come here because of the Shire, a symbol of the Murat. Now that a new Elim's Heir was born, this place will be sealed again. You will be the only one allowed to enter.*

Ark sighed with relief after hearing the sphere's words. When he came here, the pioneers at the top of the mountain were being attacked by pirates. If this place was the space pirate's purpose then Ark thought they would enter after

wiping out the pioneers. Fortunately Ark entered first. Therefore the Elim's Holy Land had become Ark's hideaway.

'It has been 20 minutes since I entered this place. There is no doubt that the pioneers would be completely wiped out by the Kero clan by now. No, it would be the same even if they aren't wiped out. The situation won't change even if I exit now. But.....'

They had believed in him and followed him to the summit. Yet the moment they would about to begin the decisive battle, Ark alone went into hiding. Of course that wasn't his aim but it had ended up like that. The pioneers left behind by Ark to die would curse him!

'I still have to check on the situation.'

Ark sighed again before looking at the sphere of light.

"Is it possible for me to confirm the situation on Mt. Fargo?"

—Of course. I'll show it on the screen.

An image appeared after the light sphere's answer. One of its functions was CCTV. Then he looked at the image floating in the sphere of light.

"Eh? Eh eh eh?"

Ark's face warped strangely.

Pusung!

A blue light welled up from Mt. Fargo's summit.

"What, what the? Why is the same light.....?"

The people gathered in the basin looked at it with a puzzled expression. And after a while, their faces displayed shock and excitement. It was because of the person who appeared in the light. The person inside the blue light.....

“Ark! Ark-nim!”

“Ohhhh! He came back! Ark-nim is back!”

“The saviour of Mt. Fargo! The prophet Ark-nim has returned!”

The pioneers were babbling unknown words while flocking around him. This was the reason why Ark stepped outside. Ark was confused after seeing the CCTV footage. The 100 pioneers had run out of bullets so he thought they would be instantly wiped out by the thousands of Kero. Yet they were still alive. It was incomprehensible!

However Ark soon figured out the reason why. The Elim Sanctuary was hidden inside Mt. Fargo. Ark woke up the sanctuary after hundreds of years, causing Mt. Fargo to shake like an earthquake was occurring. This was the reason why the pioneers were alive. The caves inside Mt. Fargo were divided into 3 layers. Then Ark had dug 100 holes while looking for the ruins. Mt. Fargo that was made of rocks starting shaking in that state. He saw what happened in the video.

Ku ku ku ku! Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A landslide! The scarred mountain caused a landslide because of the shaking. And the Kero clan had completely covered the mountainside. The pioneers in the basin at the top were completely safe while the Kero were buried by the falling rocks. The Kero became disordered because of the landslide and were forced to retreat. It was good up to that point. He hadn't intended it but it had saved his life. There was just one problem.

“What's going on.....?”

The pioneers were saved by a natural disaster!

“Ark hyung-nim!”

Milan who had been absent-mindedly looking at where Ark disappeared suddenly shouted.

“This was Ark hyung-nim’s plan! Hyung-nim knew! He knew we couldn’t hold up until the guards arrived once we ran out of bullets. Even so, this was the reason why he came here and sacrificed himself!”

“S-sacrifice? Then perhaps?”

“Ark-nim was the one who caused the landslide?”

“Yes! Of course! Everybody saw it! Hyung-nim called down a holy light that burnt his body! And a landslide happened at the same time!”

“But even so.....”

“You’re still doubtful?”

Milan scowled with teary eyes and said.

“No, rather than doubting.....the landslide occurred because of all the holes dug yesterday.....”

“Who do you think made the holes?”

“D-don’t tell me it was Ark-nim?”

“Yes! Of course! Of course! It was Hyung-nim!”

Dudong!

The mystery of the stone mountain was suddenly solved! But there was an even more shocking truth afterwards.

“At the time I also didn’t understand why Hyung-nim stayed up all night making the holes. I didn’t know! Yes, I didn’t understand! But this was the truth! A man called Noah did something similar a long time ago. He created the ark even when people called him stupid. And finally the time came. A flood. Right now we’ve witnessed a miracle! No, it isn’t a miracle! Hyung-nim knew this was going to happen! He knew that many people would be driven here to die. What would happen if he told everyone?”

“Of course.....”

“No one would believe it! They would call him a fool! They would curse him and throw stones!”

“No, you don’t have to go that far.....”

“So Hyung-nim had to prepare it on his own! He silently shovelled while his whole body was broken and in pain! He hid this until the last moment and sacrificed his body! All so he could save us!”

“H-he did that!”

“Ark-nim dug 100 pits for us.....!”

“He even sacrificed his life for us!”

“He is truly Noah of Noah’s Ark!”

Milan’s next words made the pioneers even more excited.

“That is Hyung-nim! He also helped me the same way on Beltana! Hyung-nim silently obtained food by digging and gave it to the starving people! We were criminals who couldn’t stomach our anger against the world and he still gave it for free! I’m also a person saved by Hyung-nim. It makes my cry every time I remember it.....Hyung-nim!”

“Ehhhhh! Amazing!”

“There really is a user like that!”

“We have to be thankful! Our great martyr Ark Hyung-nim! We have to praise him! The great prophet Ark Hyung-nim!”

Milan shouted forcefully. This was the reason Ark immediately went outside. If he left the momentum like this then Milan would’ve created a fraudulent religion. Naturally Ark had no intention of being the founder of a religion. However he was a little too late.

“The great prophet Ark-nim!”

The pioneers had already been influenced by Milan. Of course, Milan was the

one who believed it the most.

“Did you see? He came back without a Fairy! The miracle of resurrection!”

He continued babbling on even after Ark returned.

‘How do I solve something like this.....?’

Ark sighed as he held his head.

“Ah! There! An airship! The guards are coming!”

A pioneer shouted as they pointed to the sky. 10 small airships were flying from the direction of the sunset. However they weren’t the airships of the Laius guards like the pioneers were expecting. They clearly had the mark of the galactic federation!

“What the? Isn’t that the federation’s battleships? Why are the federation’s battleships arriving before Laius?”

“One ship is coming down!”

Syu syu syu syu syu.

There was a storm as one ship descended to the top of the mountain. The door of the airship opened and people wearing uniform emerged. To his surprise, there was someone that Ark knew. Marquis Martin! Marquis Marin looked around and saw Ark.

“Ark, I was looking for you.”

“For me?”

“Yes, I need you to leave with me immediately. I’ll give you the details later.”

Ark was worried by Marquis Martin’s sudden words. He felt like something difficult would happen. But his worries didn’t last long.

“.....I understand.”

Anyway, all the work here was finished. He didn’t know what was going on

but he could ride the airship for free to return to the city. No, he wanted to quickly escape from the uncomfortable situation. Then Milan hurriedly came running and shouted.

“Hyung-nim, take me along too!”

“Yes.....I’ll have to bring you too.....come!”

Ark grabbed Milan’s collar and tugged. If the airships didn’t use photon movement then it would take some time to return to the city. He couldn’t refuse Marquis Martin’s offer so he would use the time to re-educate Milan. So Ark dragged Milan with him and was about to board the airship. This time Melina was the one who came running.

“Ark-nim, take me too!”

“Huh? Melina-nim?”

“It’s a request!”

“Eek? If Melina-nim is going then me too! Take me too!”

“Me as well! Ark-nim, don’t you know? We’re a set! If Melina-nim goes then we’ll come along!”

Slayer and Leon ran out next to Melina. Marquis Martin looked at them with an annoyed expression before saying.

“There is no time. Just ride! Captain, return to Tatuine immediately!”

Syu syu syu syu syu.

Ark, Milan, Leon, Slayer and Melina boarded and the airship took off. It was flying towards the headquarters of the galactic federation in Tatuine.

“As expected from Ark-nim. Even an aristocrat from the federation came to get him directly.....”

Someone’s murmur was scattered by the wind.

TO BE CONTINUED